

# INTRODUCING AMSTERDAM

THIS IMAGE  
NOT AVAILABLE  
IN PICK & MIX

You're nursing a drink in a canal café when you hear Bach. A man with a wild hairdo is playing organ *and* trumpet on a nutshell of a boat, while his feet do the steering. Only in Amsterdam...

... and back by popular demand. After a few years' pout, this beautiful city has found its old self – quirky, creative and open-minded. Yet beneath the self-assured exterior, mental notes are everywhere. Not long ago the Netherlands swung towards the right, with crackdowns on immigration, religious freedom and red-light districts. Even in freewheeling Amsterdam, people were asking themselves: is too much tolerance a bad thing?

You can breath easy: the soul-searching is over. The core values of Dutch society that we knew and loved have emerged intact. Newcomers who integrate are welcome; practising a faith is OK, as is the right to turn away from it. You like reefer madness? Fine, let's hit a coffeeshop. A studded jockstrap for skate night? No problem, that's crazy enough. Tolerance hasn't gone out of fashion, it's just had a makeover.

The city's gorgeous looks haven't faded either. The moments you spend ogling the old merchants' villas, the Jordaan's charming lanes or the lush Vondelpark are as magical now as in centuries past. The cafés are full, the museums are littered with Golden Age art and everyone still parties like there's no tomorrow. Amsterdam is a delight to visit any time of year, but it's hard to trump Queen's Day, the world's biggest party-cum-garage sale. In summer there's an endless parade of festivals and events such as the Holland Festival, the Roots Music Festival and the outrageous Gay Pride parade, as well as delightful concerts on canal stages.

This city is too relaxed to stop being fun. To join in, all you need to pack is a few days' attitude.

## AMSTERDAM LIFE

Scene: a café terrace near the Spui. Our friend Wim, the graphic designer, has just signed up for a fancy new flat in Amsterdam-Noord, and despite the snickers around the table ('Noord's sooo downmarket!') he's in the mood to celebrate. The Dutch economy is purring, and Wim has taken an interest-free mortgage with plans to resell in a few years. As do most people here tonight, but no-one says so – talking personal finances is in bad taste. But everyone agrees that long before it's finished, the new Metro line is already boosting real estate across the city.

Somebody lights a cigarette, and barkeeper Jan brings by a clean ashtray, saying enjoy it while it lasts. He's referring to the new smoking ban in cafés and restaurants, due to come into force in the summer of 2008. Cheer up, says Joke (her real name, pronounced yo-ke), dabbing her *bitterballen* in the mustard, people will always come to watch football. On the bar TV, there's AT5 sports news, with Real Madrid's plans to buy yet another Dutch player from either Ajax or Feyenoord; later Jan will switch over to Golden Cage II, the hit reality show.

Barbara, the media consultant, clothes designer and all-round multitasker, has only just arrived, trains from Utrecht being delayed again. She opens her laptop to hotspot her email, and the screen lights up her blouse composed of little CCTV logos, something she threw together for a club theme night. She has another one showing Bokito the ape in police uniform, baton at the ready under a Zeedijk sign. Why don't you do a shirt about Geert Wilders? asks Chris, the American fashion photographer over here for International Fashion Week. After all, he's the politician Amsterdammers spend most time worrying about. Wilders of the PVV party has just called, again, for the Koran to be banned in the Netherlands. Most people don't agree but his remarks grab the headlines.

Did you hear taxes for the Waterstaat (water and dam ministry) are going up, Wim complains. The government needs to spend more on the dykes, to soothe global warming fears. Chris grumbles they should be spending more on catching those supposed 'ethnic foreigners' from the news reports who beat up gays. It's giving Amsterdam *and* foreigners a bad rap. And how dare the mayor forbid gay events during major football games, in the name of conflict prevention!

By now it's early evening; this grand café is phasing from after-work drinks to restaurant mode. Where shall they go next? Café Danté? De Jaren? *Nee*, why not head over to the Nes; there's a drama festival on, the places will be hopping. A Dutch-American consensus is reached, and off they go.

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# GETTING STARTED

Amsterdam is so incredibly well organised that you won't need to plan ahead (much). Getting there is a cinch, the handsome canal-laced centre is compact and easy to explore, and regardless of the season there'll be oodles of things to do. The city is extremely popular with visitors, so booking accommodation is likely to be your most demanding task. A key thing to bear in mind: while it's possible to 'do' the Dutch capital on a busker's income, you'll breathe easier with a medium-sized wallet.

## WHEN TO GO

Try as you will, there's not really a bad time to visit Amsterdam. In any given month the festivals and celebrations will keep you going nonstop, and in a rare lull there are plenty of museums and exhibitions to hold your interest. When the weather warms up, Amsterdammers rejoice by flocking into the streets, canals and parks, and cafés happily move their seating outdoors.

The summer agenda teems with open-air concerts, theatre and festivals, often free. The party to end all orange parties is Queen's Day on 30 April, an unforgettable experience. Major cultural events include the Holland Festival and Roots Music Festival in June, Julidans in July and the Uitmarkt in August. Outdoors enthusiasts will want to take in National Cycling Day or one of the road races throughout the year.

A few of the events listed in the following section are out of town but are worth the trip. See [p246](#) for a list of public holidays – when the city has a tendency to shut down. Accommodation is cheapest from November to December, and can fall to ludicrously low levels in the bigger hotels in January and February.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The annual calendar is a never-ending procession of parties, exhibitions, concerts, festivals, sports challenges and other events almost without let-up during the entire year. Things slow down a little after New Year's as the city nurses its collective head.

### January

#### JUMPING AMSTERDAM

[www.jumpingamsterdam.nl](#)

One of the top equestrian sports events in Europe, held at the RAI ([p131](#)) convention centre in late January.

#### ELFSTEDENTOCHT (ELEVEN CITIES' JOURNEY)

[www.elfstedentocht.nl](#)

If it's cold enough for long enough, this 200km skating marathon through the northern province of Friesland draws thousands of participants. This marathon is now such a rare event that its mere announcement creates a buzz around the country.

### February

#### CARNAVAL

[www.carnaval.in.nl](#)

Enjoyed with extreme gusto in southern Holland, Carnival is a Catholic tradition that goes down well with Amsterdammers who happen to like partying in silly costumes.

#### COMMEMORATION OF THE FEBRUARY STRIKE

Held on 25 February, wreaths are laid at the Dockworker monument in the former Jewish quarter, in memory of the 1941 general strike against the Nazis.

### March

#### STILLE OMGANG (SILENT PROCESSION)

On the Sunday closest to 15 March, Catholics walk along the Holy Way (the street 'Heiligeweg' is a remnant) to commemorate the Miracle of Amsterdam (see the boxed text, [p73](#)).

### April

#### NATIONAL MUSEUM WEEKEND

Usually held on the second weekend of April, with free entry to all museums and the crowds to match.

#### KONINGINNEDAG (QUEEN'S DAY)

[www.koninginnedagamsterdam.nl](#)

Celebrated on 30 April – actually the birthday of Juliana, mother of the current Queen Beatrix – Queen's Day is an uproarious madhouse and highlight of the annual calendar. A 'free market' is held throughout the city, meaning anyone can sell anything they like, and the vast terrain of sidewalks (staked out by vendors well ahead of time) becomes a comical open-air showroom of items ranging from precious heirlooms to outright junk. Grab your orange wig and suspenders and hang on tight for musical revelry, rivers of beer and about two million happy visitors. And expect to walk a lot, as the streets are too packed for the buses and trams to run.

#### WORLD BOOK CAPITAL

[www.amsterdamwereldboekenstad.nl](#)

As Unesco's World Book Capital of the year, Amsterdam plays host to a gaggle of literary events such as exhibitions, a children's parade and readings by famous authors in crowded bookshops. From 23 April 2008 through to 22 April 2009.

#### WORLD PRESS PHOTO

[www.worldpressphoto.org](#)

Pictures shot by the best photojournalists on the planet, on display at the Oude Kerk from late April till early June.

### May

#### REMEMBRANCE DAY

Held on 4 May for the victims of WWII.

Queen Beatrix lays a wreath at the Nationaal Monument on the Dam and the city observes two minutes' silence at 8pm.

#### LIBERATION DAY

The end of German occupation in 1945 is commemorated with speeches, concerts and street parties on 5 May. The Vondelpark is a good place to be.

#### LUILAK ('LAZY-BONES')

In the early hours on the Saturday before Whit Sunday, children go around ringing door bells, making noise and waking up people who haven't bought earplugs. Luilak is a hold-over from a pre-Christian festival celebrating the awakening of spring.

#### NATIONAL WINDMILL DAY

Held on the second Saturday in May, 600 windmills throughout the country unfurl their sails and welcome the public into their innards.

#### NATIONAL CYCLING DAY

Held in mid- to late May, and includes family cycling trips along special routes.

#### PINKPOP

[www.pinkpop.nl](#)

This three-day outdoor rock festival held around Pentecost (May/June) takes place near Landgraaf, about 135km southeast of Amsterdam. Past events have featured bands such as the Smashing Pumpkins and the Arctic Monkeys.

### June

#### HOLLAND FESTIVAL

[www.hollandfstvl.nl](#)

For all of June the country's biggest music, drama and dance extravaganza practically takes over Amsterdam. Highbrow and pretentious meet lowbrow and silly.

#### VONDELPARK OPEN-AIR THEATRE

[www.openluchttheater.nl](#)

A popular Amsterdam tradition featuring classical music, dance, musical theatre, cabaret and children's shows in a wonderful park setting. Early June through to mid-August.

#### OPEN GARDEN DAYS

[www.opentuinendagen.nl](#)

On the third weekend in June, the public has a unique opportunity to view some 30 gardens of private homes and institutions along the canals.

#### ROOTS MUSIC FESTIVAL

[www.amsterdamroots.nl](#)

A lively, week-long extravaganza of world music, theatre, dance and film held at the Tropenmuseum, Concertgebouw and other key venues in late June.

#### PARKPOP

[www.parkpop.nl](#)

Europe's largest free pop festival is also one of its best organised and, with crowds of up to 200,000 partying fans, it needs to be. Last Sunday in June, at Den Haag's Zuiderpark.

## INTERNATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL FESTIVAL

[www.itsfestival.nl](http://www.itsfestival.nl)

For 10 days around the end of the month, Dutch and international drama students strut their stuff.

## July

### JAZZ OP HET DAK

[www.e-nemo.nl](http://www.e-nemo.nl)

High-flying concerts pull big talent to the sloping roof of the NEMO museum (p69). First weekend of July.

### 5 DAYS OFF

[www.5daysoff.nl](http://www.5daysoff.nl)

Electronic music festival with dance parties at the Melkweg, Paradiso and the Heineken Music Hall the first week of the month.

### OVER HET IJ FESTIVAL

[www.overhetij.nl](http://www.overhetij.nl)

Large-scale theatre, music and fine arts do, in off-beat venues at the NDSM shipyards in Amsterdam-Noord, for 10 days in early July. Always fresh and exciting.

### JULIDANS

[www.julidans.nl](http://www.julidans.nl)

Renowned dance festival with influential choreographers. It draws some 20,000 visitors during the first half of July, all the more remarkable given it takes place at small venues around town.

### NORTH SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL

[www.northseajazz.nl](http://www.northseajazz.nl)

The world's largest indoor jazz festival takes place in Rotterdam's renowned Ahoy complex in mid-July. The performers' list reads like a 'who's who' of jazz, and many of the musicians play venues in Amsterdam as well.

### ROBECO SUMMER CONCERTS

[www.robecozomerconcerten.nl](http://www.robecozomerconcerten.nl)

Annual showcase of classical concerts featuring up-and-coming talent and a spate of events in the Concertgebouw (p199). Mid-July through August.

### INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK

[www.amsterdamfashionweek.com](http://www.amsterdamfashionweek.com)

The Netherlands' top fashion event features catwalks, films and parties galore

during the last 10 days of the month; it takes place on Museumplein and in the Westergasfabriek.

## August

### AMSTERDAM PRIDE FESTIVAL

[www.weareproud.nl](http://www.weareproud.nl)

The rainbow flag blankets Amsterdam the first weekend of the month, with oodles of parties and special events. The climax, the Gay Pride Parade, is the world's only waterborne spectacle of its flesh-bearing kind.

### PARADE

[www.mobilearts.nl](http://www.mobilearts.nl)

In the first half of the month, this old-time funfair and theatre festival at Martin Luther King Park is a magnet for small fry and parents alike.

### DANCE VALLEY

[www.dancevalley.nl](http://www.dancevalley.nl)

Held mid-August on a fairground at Spaarnwoude, near Amsterdam. Tens of thousands groove in circus tents as celebrity DJs spin their spells.

### GRACHTENFESTIVAL (CANAL FESTIVAL)

[www.grachtenfestival.nl](http://www.grachtenfestival.nl)

This music festival delights with classical concerts around the Canal Belt in the second half of August. The Prinsengracht Concert takes place on barges in front of the Hotel Pulitzer.

### HARTJESDAGEN ZEEDIJK

[www.zeedijk.nl](http://www.zeedijk.nl)

Held on the third Monday and the weekend before it, this festival, dating back to medieval times, features street theatre, a transvestite parade and all kinds of costumed extroverts on Zeedijk and Nieuwmarkt.

### UITMARKT

[www.uitmarkt.nl](http://www.uitmarkt.nl)

For the last weekend of August, local troupes and orchestras present their forthcoming repertoires free of charge in the Eastern Docklands. It's a bit like Koningsinnedag in April, but Uitmarkt is more relaxed.

## SINTERKLAAS

Every year on 6 December, the Dutch celebrate Sinterklaas in honour of St Nicholas (Klaas is a nickname for Nicholas, or Nicolaas in Dutch). Historically St Nicholas was the bishop of Myra in western Turkey around AD 345, but he's better known as the patron saint of children, sailors, merchants and pawnbrokers – not to mention the city of Amsterdam.

In mid- to late November the white-bearded saint, dressed as a bishop with mitre and staff, arrives in Amsterdam by steamboat from 'Spain' and parades down the Damrak on horseback to receive the city keys from the mayor. He is accompanied by a host of mischievous servants called Zwarte Pieten (Black Peters), Dutch helpers in blackface (or politically correct blue- or greenface) who throw sweets around and carry sacks in which to take naughty children away. Well-behaved children get presents in a shoe that they've placed by the fireplace with a carrot for the saint's horse (which stays on the roof while a Black Peter climbs down the chimney).

On the evening of 5 December, people give one another anonymous and creatively wrapped gifts accompanied by funny or perceptive poems about the recipient written by Sinterklaas. The gift itself matters less than the wrapping (the greater the surprise, the better) and poetry (the more the recipient is put on the spot, the better).

The North American Santa Claus evolved from the Sinterklaas celebrations at the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, which eventually became New York.

## September

### OPEN MONUMENTENDAG

[www.openmonumentendag.nl](http://www.openmonumentendag.nl)

Registered historical buildings are thrown open to the public on the second weekend of September.

### JORDAAN FESTIVAL

[www.jordaanfestival.nl](http://www.jordaanfestival.nl)

The third weekend of September, with music, amateur contests and other festivities around the Westerkerk and elsewhere in the charming Jordaan district. Hundreds of small boats take to the canals.

### DAM TOT DAMLOOP

[www.damloop.nl](http://www.damloop.nl)

This is a 16km foot-race between the Dam in Amsterdam and the Dam in Zaandam. Expect up to 20,000 runners and many times that in spectators. Third Sunday of the month.

### ROBODOCK FESTIVAL

[www.robodock.org](http://www.robodock.org)

Powerhouse theatre and multimedia events with a postindustrial flavour. Third weekend of September.

### AMSTERDAM UNDERGROUND FESTIVAL

[www.amsterdamunderground.nl](http://www.amsterdamunderground.nl)

A four-day celebration of the subterranean city at the end of September, with theatre, music, film, dance and art events. Its sunken locations have included the interiors of bridges, a tunnelling site for the

North-South metro line and a mysterious passage directly beneath the IJ river tunnel.

## October

### AMSTERDAM MARATHON

[www.amsterdammarathon.nl](http://www.amsterdammarathon.nl)

Thousands of runners lope along the canals in this epic race that begins and ends at the Olympic Stadium. Held mid-month, with several types of runs.

## November

### MUSEUM NIGHT

[www.n8.nl](http://www.n8.nl)

Some 40 museums stay open late with live music, DJs and a liver-wilting array of after-parties. First Saturday of the month.

### CANNABIS CUP

[www.hightimes.com](http://www.hightimes.com)

Hosted by *High Times* magazine, this far-out festival doles out awards for the nicest grass, biggest reefer and the best 'pot comedian'. Held in mid-November, complete with hemp expo and fashion show.

### SINTERKLAAS PARADE

St Nicholas arrives by boat from Spain in mid- to late November (see the boxed text, above).

## December

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

Organised fireworks displays over the Amstel and elsewhere around town. The

Dutch are absolutely mad about pyrotechnics, making even the most informal celebrations a spark-showing spectacle (try Nieuwmarkt).

## COSTS & MONEY

The cost of living is about average for a northern Europe city, but less expensive than London or Paris. If you're coming from the UK, prices may look the same numerically but the exchange rate on the pound usually makes Amsterdam a bargain. That said, it's disturbingly easy to spend more money than you planned on, though with a few simple measures you can stop the rot.

Accommodation will likely be your major expense. Although budget lodging can be relatively inexpensive, you'll pay dearly for anything of quality. Booking package deals, taking advantage of internet discounts and visiting in the low season can drastically cut your hotel bill. Prices ease slightly in the budget and midrange brackets as you move away from the old centre, and though you're slightly further away from the action, the standard of facilities tends to go up.

The majority of hostels charge around €20 to €25 for a bed, though at rock-bottom you can find digs from around €17. Budget hotels charge around €55 to €80 for a basic double. A room in a midrange hotel or B&B goes for €80 to €160 for a standard double, with the average somewhere around €125. For a flashy boutique or luxury hotel, expect to pay from €160, though things start to get really comfy around €200 (see also p211).

### HOW MUCH?

Litre of bottled water: €0.57

Litre of unleaded petrol/gasoline: €1.40

Glass of Heineken: €2

Kroket sandwich at van Dobben: €2

One hour of parking: €3.50

Strippenskaart (15-strip ticket for public transport): €6.80

Cinema ticket: €8

Robust bicycle lock: €13

Rijsttafel dinner at Tuhuh Maret Indonesian restaurant: €23.50

Tip in a public toilet: €0.50

As for food, you'll find lots of cafés and restaurants with three- or four-course meals anywhere from €18 to €40, though most will be around €25 to €35, and the bill can easily be more in swanky places. You can economise by taking your main meal at lunchtime, as €5 to €10 or so will buy a daily special and a drink, and then having a snack for dinner. Self-catering is an attractive option, as delis and supermarket chains like Albert Heijn stock sandwiches and prepared meals (see p158). A consolation is the reasonable price of drinks in bars and cafés, though wine tends to be overpriced in a land of beer-lovers.

Museums can be a drain on resources at about €10 a pop for the top exhibitions, but discounts are available – see p245 for discount cards, special passes and packages. Remember that many of the summer festivals cost nothing to attend (see p16), and some cultural institutions offer free treats such as the lunchtime concerts at the Concertgebouw (p199).

Public transport is remarkably cheap, costing from €0.90 per regular journey in the city centre using a *strippenkaart* or *OV-chipkaart* (see p243), and bicycle rental will only set you back €7 to €10 per day. If you're looking to save money, avoid taxis! Fares vary but are generally €3.40 at the drop and another €1.94 per kilometre, and the total bill mounts quickly. Petrol (gasoline) is among the priciest in Europe at around €1.40 per litre of unleaded but, then again, you'll hardly need a car once you're in Amsterdam.

To sum up, budget travellers staying in hostels or cheap hotels, eating in modest restaurants and visiting a museum or two should be able to scrape by on €40 to €60 a day. Staying in midrange hotels and eating in midrange restaurants equates to €80 to €100 a person per day in peak season. From around €150 per day, you can stay in four- and five-star hotels, dine at fancy restaurants and hire a private boat, provided a few others chip in.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Amsterdam is a pretty switched-on place and the web, eureka, is a fertile source of information. Here's a selection of relevant sites, some for practical planning, others for feeding your head.

<http://homepage.mac.com/schuffelen> Dutch pronunciation (MP3s to download).

[www.amsterdamtourist.nl](http://www.amsterdamtourist.nl) The tourist board's answer to iamsterdam.com.

## ADVANCE PLANNING

Before you head to Amsterdam, note that hotels book up fast in high season or around big events like trade fairs, so try to book your accommodation well ahead of time. The hotel-booking function at [www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com) gives a quick idea of availability on a certain date, although as with most online hotel services, not all places are listed.

Read the *Amsterdam Weekly* ([www.amsterdamweekly.nl](http://www.amsterdamweekly.nl)) to see what's on in the way of festivals and special events. You might also check the sked at the RAI convention centre (p131), which puts on interesting trade fairs. Football fans scan for matches of leading Dutch teams on [www.soccerway.com](http://www.soccerway.com). Apart from the events themselves, you'll get clue about the crowd levels in town and the demand for hotel rooms.

Be sure to check the weather reports and tailor your activities (eg rain = museums, sun = canal-hopping). Pack layers of clothing and a raincoat, bearing in mind the Dutch weather is notoriously fickle and there can be chilly spells even in summer.

When planning to dine out it pays to reserve ahead in popular restaurants, sometimes several days ahead of time (see p157). And last but not least, take a pair of earplugs to ensure a good night's sleep.

[www.amsterdamweekly.nl](http://www.amsterdamweekly.nl) Good feature articles and catch-all listings.

[www.bma.amsterdam.nl](http://www.bma.amsterdam.nl) Amsterdam Heritage and its historical buildings.

[www.expatica.com](http://www.expatica.com) For expats and all those who strive to be one.

[www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com) Excellent site run by the city of Amsterdam.

[www.iens.nl](http://www.iens.nl) Top dining-out pages with ratings and reviews.

[www.panoramsterdam.com](http://www.panoramsterdam.com) For 360-degree views of your favourite city.

[www.startamsterdam.com](http://www.startamsterdam.com) Link-rich site for art, culture and places of interest.

[www.underwateramsterdam.com](http://www.underwateramsterdam.com) Alternative listings, with a bit of everything.

## SUSTAINABLE AMSTERDAM

Amsterdammers are acutely aware of the strains on their fair city, and though visitors

aren't expected to go overboard, your contribution to a cleaner environment will be much appreciated. You can start by keeping your 'carbon footprint' as small as possible (ie by taking a low-emission train to your destination, or ride-sharing by car).

The petite city centre is tailor-made for bicycles and foot traffic. Once you're here there's little need for a car, which anyway is more a curse than a blessing in the quaint but perennially clogged lanes of the Canal Belt. The efficient web of bus, tram and metro lines is a much better option and feeds seamlessly into the national transport system. Amsterdam's long-standing policy of curbing motor-vehicle use reduces not only congestion, but air pollution (electric cargo trams are being launched in 2008 for the very same reason).

Most glass bottles carry a deposit, returnable to supermarkets for a refund. Disposable bottles (both glass and plastic) can be deposited into bottle banks located around town. Recyclable paper containers are becoming more common too (see p43).



# THE AUTHOR

## Jeremy Gray



Born in Louisiana of English parents, Jeremy went to university in Texas and has since lived in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. When he first visited Amsterdam in 1998, it immediately felt like home, so he upped

and moved to a flat in the Eastern Islands. Soon Jeremy was lingering with the locals in brown cafés, bumping on his bike along the canals and toe-tapping to jazz at the Bimhuis. He admires the Dutch for their bubbly *gezelligheid*, spontaneity and openness – and fondly recalls how a near-stranger revealed that she was the test-tube child of his landlord's girlfriend's father. The only Calvinist finger-wag came from his barber, for not supporting the local pub. Jeremy now lives in Berlin, where he divides his time between travel writing, photography and documentary film. He returns to Amsterdam as often as possible just to see gorgeous canals. You can find more of his work at [www.jeremygray.com](http://www.jeremygray.com).

### JEREMY'S TOP AMSTERDAM DAY

There's no beating an early stroll when the old merchants' homes of the Canal Belt glow softly in the morning light. First stop is a café in the Negen Straatjes district, to say *dag* to the owner and catch up on the papers before

poking round the interesting shops nearby. The organic stalls are open at the lovely Noordermarkt, so I can pick up kitchen herbs, ripe Gouda and a *bosje* (bunch) of flowers; all go in the bicycle basket. Got bread and some *osseworst* as well so I phone the sweetie and meet in the Vondelpark for an impromptu picnic. In the afternoon we check out a photo exhibition at FOAM. Then it's off to the shop Concerto to pick up a CD, followed by a *biertje* at a café in the Utrechtsestraat where we end up staying for dinner. A concert at club Paradiso, followed by a cocktail at a bar-nightclub near Leidseplein, rounds off an ideal day in the canal city.

## PHOTOGRAPHER

### Will Salter

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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCING AMSTERDAM</b>	<b>2</b>	Western Canal Belt	145
<b>HIGHLIGHTS</b>	<b>4</b>	Southern Canal Belt	148
<b>THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>15</b>	Old South	152
<b>GETTING STARTED</b>	<b>16</b>	Vondelpark & Around	152
When to Go	16	De Pijp	153
Costs & Money	20	Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands	153
Internet Resources	20	Outer Districts	154
Sustainable Amsterdam	21	<b>EATING</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>22</b>	City Centre	158
History	22	Jordaan	161
Culture	30	Western Canal Belt	163
Arts	32	Southern Canal Belt	166
Environment & Planning	42	Old South	170
Government & Politics	44	Vondelpark & Around	170
Architecture	<b>45</b>	De Pijp	171
Media	53	Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands	173
Language	53	Oosterpark & Around	174
<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS</b>	<b>55</b>	Outer Districts	175
Itinerary Builder	60	<b>DRINKING &amp; SMOKING</b>	<b>177</b>
City Centre	61	City Centre	180
Jordaan	84	Jordaan	185
Western Canal Belt	91	Western Canal Belt	187
Southern Canal Belt	98	Southern Canal Belt	189
Old South	109	Old South	191
Vondelpark & Around	115	Vondelpark & Around	192
De Pijp	118	De Pijp	192
Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands	121	Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands	192
Oosterpark & Around	128	Oosterpark & Around	194
Outer Districts	130	<b>NIGHTLIFE &amp; THE ARTS</b>	<b>195</b>
Further Afield	132	Clubbing	196
<b>SHOPPING</b>	<b>135</b>	Rock, Jazz & Blues	197
City Centre	137	World Music	198
Jordaan	142		

*Continued from previous page.*

<b>Classical Music</b>	199	<b>Oosterpark &amp; Around</b>	224
<b>Cinema</b>	200	<b>Outer Districts</b>	224
<b>Comedy</b>	201	<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Theatre, Dance &amp; Spoken Word</b>	201	<b>Haarlem</b>	228
		<b>Leiden</b>	231
		<b>Utrecht</b>	233
		<b>Alkmaar</b>	236
<b>GAY &amp; LESBIAN AMSTERDAM</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>Zaanse Schans</b>	237
<b>Shopping</b>	204	<b>Aalsmeer</b>	238
<b>Drinking &amp; Nightlife</b>	204	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Sleeping</b>	207	<b>DIRECTORY</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Further Resources</b>	207	<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>258</b>
		<b>BEHIND THE SCENES</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>SLEEPING</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>INDEX</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>City Centre</b>	212	<b>WORLD TIME ZONES</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Jordaan</b>	214	<b>MAP LEGEND</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>Western Canal Belt</b>	215		
<b>Southern Canal Belt</b>	217		
<b>Old South</b>	219		
<b>Vondelpark &amp; Around</b>	220		
<b>De Pijp</b>	222		
<b>Plantage, Eastern Islands &amp; Eastern Docklands</b>	222		

# BACKGROUND

## HISTORY FROM THE BEGINNING

Originally, the region that spawned a giant trading community was an inhospitable patchwork of lakes, swamps and peat, at or below sea level; its contours shifted with the autumn storms and floods. The oldest archaeological finds here date from Roman times, when the IJ river lay along the northern border of the Roman Empire. Too busy elsewhere, and no doubt put off by the mushy conditions, the Romans left practically no evidence of settlement.

Isolated farming communities tamed the marshlands with ditches and dykes. Between 1150 and 1300 the south bank of the IJ was dyked from the Zuiderzee westwards to Haarlem. Around 1200, a fishing community known as Aemstelredamme – ‘the dam built across the Amstel’ – emerged at what is now the Dam. On 27 October 1275, the count of Holland waived tolls for those who lived around the Amstel dam, allowing locals to pass the locks and bridges of Holland free of charge, and the town of Amsterdam was born.

## EARLY TRADE

Farming was tricky on the marshland, and with the sea on the doorstep, early residents turned to fishing. But it was commercial trade that would put Holland on the map. While powerful city-states focused on overland trade with Flanders and northern Italy, Amsterdam levelled its sights on the maritime routes. The big prizes were the North and Baltic seas, in the backyard of the powerful Hanseatic League, a group of German trading cities.

Ignoring the league, Amsterdam’s clever *vrijbuiters* (booty-chasers) sailed right into the Baltic, their holds full of cloth and salt to exchange for grain and timber. It was nothing short of a coup. By the late 1400s, nearly two-thirds of ships sailing to and from the Baltic Sea were from Holland, mostly based in Amsterdam.

Already strained to capacity, the original harbour on the Damrak and Rokin was extended north into the IJ river, near what is now Centraal Station. Canals were dug to the warehouses in today’s Medieval Centre. By this time sailors, merchants, artisans and opportunists from the Low Countries (roughly present-day Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) made their living here.

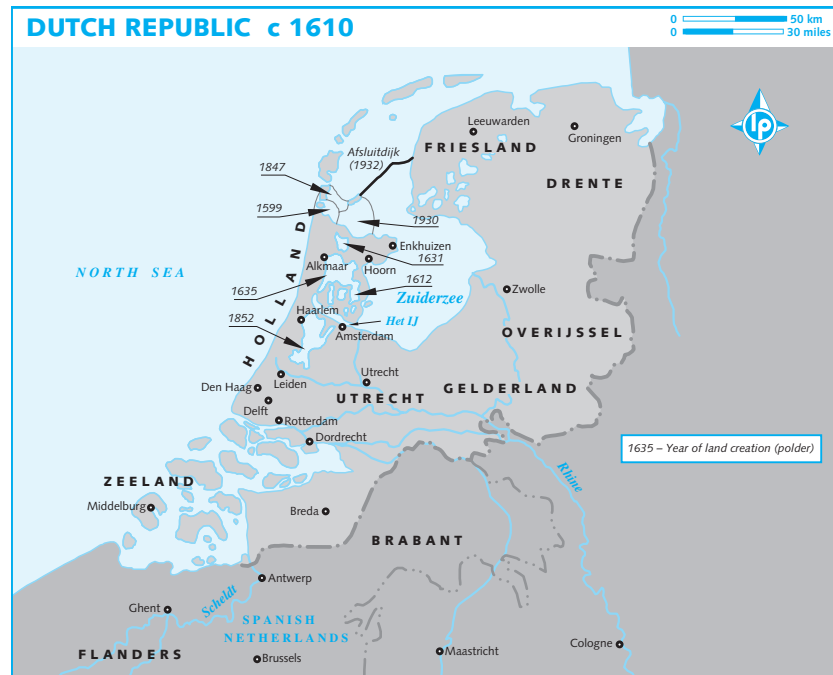
At the time, Amsterdam was unfettered by the key structures of other European societies. With no tradition of Church-sanctioned feudal relationships, no distinction between nobility and serfs, and hardly any taxation, a society of individualism and capitalism slowly took root.

## INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC

More than being about religion, the Protestant Reformation was also a classic power struggle between the ‘new money’, an emerging class of merchants and artisans, and the ‘old money’, the land-owning, aristocratic order sanctioned by the established Catholic Church.

## TIMELINE

1150–1300	1220	1275	1380	1452	1519
Dams are built to retain the IJ river between the Zuiderzee and Haarlem. A tiny community of herring fishermen settles on the banks of the Amstel river.	A barrier dubbed ‘the Dam’ is built at the mouth of the Amstel river to control the tidal waters of the Zuiderzee.	Amsterdam is founded after the count of Holland grants toll-free status to residents along the Amstel. The city gains its first direct access to the ocean via the Zuiderzee, now the IJsselmeer.	Canals of the present-day Medieval Centre are dug. Amsterdam flourishes, winning control over the sea trade in Scandinavia and later gaining free access to the Baltic, breaking the Hansa monopoly.	Fire devours the timber frames and thatch of central Amsterdam. New building laws decree that only brick and tile be used in future.	Spain’s Charles V is crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Treaties and dynastic marriages make Amsterdam part of the Spanish empire, with Catholicism the main faith. Protestants are tolerated in Amsterdam.



The Protestantism that took hold in the Low Countries was its most radically moralistic stream, known as Calvinism. It stressed the might of God and treated humans as sinful creatures whose duty in life was sobriety and hard work. The Calvinists stood for local decision-making – a sign of things to come in Dutch ‘polder’ society – and had a disdain for the top-down hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Calvinism was a key to the struggle for independence from King Philip II of Spain. Philip, a fanatically devout Catholic, had acquired the Low Countries in something of a horse trade with Austria. His efforts to introduce the Spanish Inquisition, centralise government and levy taxes enraged his subjects and, even worse, awoke a sense of national pride. After 80 years of rebellion, the Spanish finally threw in the towel and signed the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

With mighty Amsterdam on their side, the seven northern provinces declared themselves to be an independent republic, led by William the Silent, the seed that grew into today’s royal family. (He was dubbed ‘the Silent’ because he wisely refused to enter into religious debate.) The Seven United Provinces became known to the outside world as the Dutch Republic – or simply ‘Holland’ because that province dominated. Within Holland, Amsterdam towered over all the other cities put together.



## GOLDEN AGE (1580–1700)

Amsterdam grew rapidly. In the 1580s, land was reclaimed from the IJ and Amstel to create the present Nieuwmarkt district. Two decades later, work began on the Canal Belt that more than tripled the city's area.

By 1600, Dutch ships controlled the sea trade between England, France, Spain and the Baltic, and had a virtual monopoly on North Sea fishing and Arctic whaling. Jewish refugees taught Dutch mariners about trade routes, giving rise to the legendary United East India and West India Companies. Tiny Holland burned brightly; for a while it ran rings around the fleets of great powers, which were too slow or cumbersome to react.

Amsterdam's fortunes rose when Antwerp, its major trading rival in the Low Countries, was retaken by the Spaniards. Half the population of Antwerp fled, and merchants, skippers and artisans flocked to Amsterdam, bringing entire industries with them such as printing and silk-weaving. Persecuted Jews were welcomed from Portugal and Spain, and Germany proved a ready source of sailors and labourers. Later, a second wave of Jews arrived from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as persecuted Huguenots from France. In the absence of an overriding religion, ethnic background or political entity, money reigned supreme.

By 1620, Dutch traders were exploring the far corners of the earth. They rounded the tip of South America, naming it Cape Horn after the city of Hoorn, north of Amsterdam. They expelled the Portuguese from the Moluccas, also known as the Spice Islands, in present-day Indonesia, and set up outposts in the Pacific and Americas. By 1641 the Dutch had taken control of Formosa and garnered sole trading rights with Japan.

Their good luck continued, and in 1652, Dutch sailors captured the Cape of Good Hope and booted the Portuguese out of Ceylon soon after. They also explored the coastlines of New Zealand, named after the Dutch province of Zeeland and New Holland (now Australia), but found nothing of value there.

By this point the Dutch had more seagoing merchant vessels than England and France combined. Half of all ships sailing between Europe and Asia belonged to the *Hollanders*, and exotic products became commodities – coffee, tea, spices, tobacco, cotton, silk and porcelain. Amsterdam became home to Europe's largest ship-building industry, and as wages remained low, investment capital flowed in.

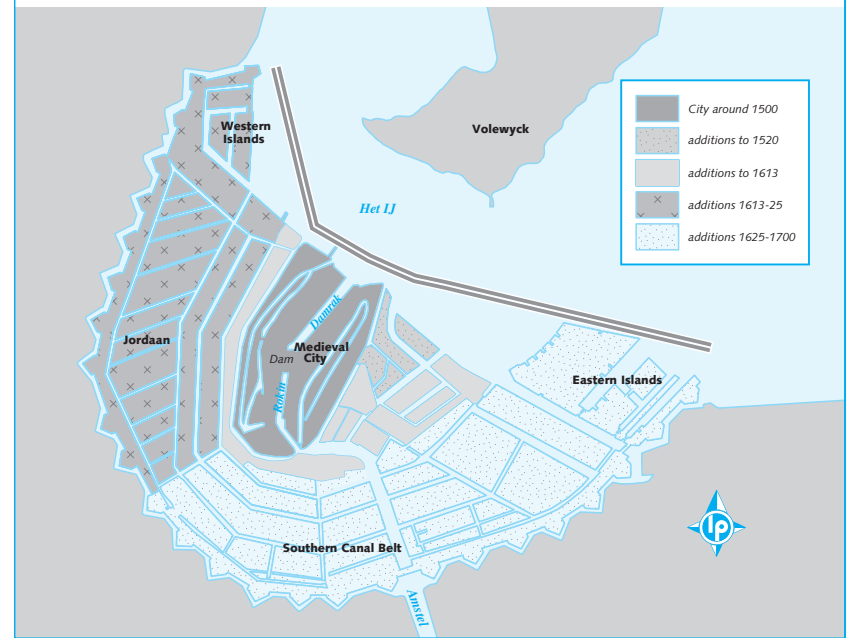
In 1651 England passed the first of several Navigation Acts that posed a serious threat to Dutch trade, leading to several thorny, inconclusive wars on the seas. Its competitors sussed out Holland's trade secrets, regrouped, and reconquered the sea routes. In one nasty encounter, the Dutch lost the colony of New Amsterdam (New York City) to the British. Louis XIV of France seized the opportunity to invade the Low Countries two decades later, and the few short decades of prosperity known as Golden Age ended.

## WEALTHY DECLINE (1700–1814)

While the Dutch Republic didn't have the resources to fight France and England head-on, it had Amsterdam's money to buy them off and ensure freedom of the seas.

As the costs mounted, Amsterdam went from being a place where everything (profitable) was possible, to a lethargic community where wealth creation was a matter of interest rates. Gone were the daring sea voyages, achievements in art, science and technology, the innovations of government and finance. Ports such as London and Hamburg became powerful rivals.

## 17TH-CENTURY AMSTERDAM



The decline in trade brought poverty, and exceptionally cold winters hampered transport and led to serious food shortages. The winters of 1740 and 1763 were so severe that some residents froze to death.

Amsterdam's support of the American War of Independence (1776) resulted in a British blockade of the Dutch coast followed by British conquests of Dutch trading posts around the world, forcing the closure of the West India and East India Companies.

In 1794 the French revolutionary troops invaded the Low Countries. The Dutch Republic became a monarchy in 1806, when Napoleon nominated his brother Louis Napoleon as king. Two years later the grand city hall on the Dam, symbol of Dutch merchant wealth and power, was made his palace (now the Royal Palace, p67). Napoleon soon dismissed his brother and annexed Holland into the French Empire.

Britain responded by blockading the Continent and occupying the Dutch colonies. Amsterdam's great trade and fishing industries ground to a halt, and people turned increasingly to agriculture for a living. Holland's commercial hub quickly became a sleepy market town.

After Napoleon's defeat in 1813, Amsterdam's trade with the world recovered only slowly; domination of the seas now belonged to the British.

1535

A group of naked Anabaptists (motto: 'Truth is Naked') occupies Amsterdam's city hall, but are defeated by the city watch in fierce battle and brutally executed.

1566–68

The Low Countries revolt against a lack of religious freedom and the repressive acts of Philip II of Spain, launching the 80 years' war. In Friesland the rebels win their first battle, which would be immortalised in the Dutch national anthem.

1578

Amsterdam is captured in a bloodless coup by fanatic Calvinist brigands, known as *watergeuzen* (sea beggars). A Dutch republic made up of seven provinces is declared a year later, led by William the Silent.

1618

The world's first regular newspaper, the trade-oriented *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.*, is printed in Amsterdam, already a publishing centre of maps, atlases and sea charts. Catholicism is outlawed, though clandestine worship is permitted.

1688

William III of Orange repels the French with the help of Austria, Spain and Brandenburg (Prussia); William then invades England, where he and his wife, Mary Stuart, are proclaimed king and queen.

1795

French troops occupy the Netherlands and install the Batavian Republic, named after the Batavian tribe that rebelled against Roman rule in AD 69. The fragmented United Provinces become a centralised state, with Amsterdam as its capital.

## HISTORY BUFFS' BIBLES

- *The Embarrassment of Riches*, by Simon Schama, is an epic account of Dutch culture in the Golden Age, using art to mirror a nation with all its neuroses and religious idiosyncrasies. Masterfully written and full of off-beat themes such as the popularity of breakfast paintings.
- *Amsterdam: The Brief Life of a City*, by Geert Mak, is an engaging, awesomely researched book that combines a broad historical narrative with anecdotes about Amsterdam's more riveting characters. One of the country's leading journalists, Mak does not shy away from showing uncomfortable truths, be it in trade, war, religion or government.
- *Tulip Fever*, by Deborah Moggach, offers a feel for Amsterdam proper around the time when Rembrandt was at his peak and tulips were worth more than their weight in gold. A nice bonus is the reproductions of Dutch paintings in some editions.
- *Max Havelaar*, by Multatuli, is written by a colonial administrator and Amsterdam native, who went by the pen name of Multatuli (see p95). This classic depicts the hypocrisy of Dutch coffee traders in Java. The book shocked Dutch society, and then the government into revising colonial policy in Indonesia.

## NEW INFRASTRUCTURE (1814–1918)

Amsterdam in the first half of the 19th century was an uninspiring place. Its harbour had been neglected, and the sandbanks in the IJ proved too great a barrier for modern ships. Rotterdam was set to become the country's premier port.

Things began to look up as the country's first railway, between Amsterdam and Haarlem, opened in 1839. Trade with the East Indies was the backbone of Amsterdam's economy, and a canal, later extended to the Rhine, helped the city to benefit from the Industrial Revolution underway in Europe.

The diamond industry boomed after the discovery of diamonds in South Africa. Amsterdam again attracted immigrants, and its population doubled in the second half of the 19th century. Speculators hastily erected new housing beyond the Canal Belt – dreary, shoddily built tenement blocks.

In 1889 the Centraal Station was built on several artificial islands in the IJ, seen as a symbolic severing of Amsterdam's historical ties with the sea. Towards the end of the 19th century, some of the city's waterways and canals were filled in for hygienic reasons (such as cholera epidemics) and to create roads.

The Netherlands remained neutral in WWI, but Amsterdam's trade with the East Indies suffered from naval blockades. There were riots over food shortages. An attempt to bring the socialist revolution to the Netherlands was put down by loyalist troops.

## BOOM & DEPRESSION (1918–40)

After the war, Amsterdam remained the country's industrial centre. The Dutch Shipbuilding Company operated the world's second-largest wharf and helped carry a large steel and diesel-motor industry. The harbour handled tropical produce that was processed locally, such as tobacco and cocoa; today, Amsterdam is still the world's biggest centre for cocoa distribution.

## BENDING THE GOLDEN RULES

No mistake, Amsterdam has always been short of building space. When the authorities embarked on their expensive Canal Belt project, they drew up detailed laws to ensure this scarce commodity would return a maximum profit.

On the outer bank of Herengracht, plots were limited to a width of 30ft and a depth of 190ft (in pre-metric days). There were no limits on building height at the front of each plot, but the rear could not be higher than 10ft to preserve the atmosphere of the luxury gardens beyond. Buyers also had to pay for the brick quayside in front of their plots. Subdivisions were prohibited to maintain the value of the properties.

So much for the theory. In practice, the very wealthiest Amsterdammers got dispensation, as can be seen in the towering palaces along the 'Golden Bend' of Herengracht, between Leidsestraat and Vijzelstraat. Elsewhere, regulations were a matter of creative interpretation – for instance, by buying two adjacent plots and building one house with two fronts.

The 1920s were boom years. KLM (Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij; Royal Aviation Company) began the world's first regular air service in 1920 between Amsterdam and London, from an airstrip south of the city, and bought many of its planes from Anthony Fokker's factory north of the IJ. There were two huge breweries, a sizable clothing industry and even a local car factory. The city hosted the Olympic Games in 1928.

The world Depression in the 1930s hit Amsterdam hard. Make-work projects did little to defuse the mounting tensions between socialists, communists and a small but vocal party of Dutch fascists. The city took in 25,000 Jewish refugees fleeing Germany; a shamefully large number were turned back at the border because of the country's neutrality policy.

## WWII (1940–45)

The Netherlands tried to remain neutral in WWII, but Germany invaded in May 1940. For the first time in almost 400 years, Amsterdammers experienced war first-hand.

Few wanted to believe that things would turn really nasty (the Germans, after all, had trumpeted that the Dutch were of the 'Aryan brotherhood'). However, in February 1941, dockworkers led a protest strike over the treatment of Jews, commemorated as the 'February Strike' (see p16). By then, however, it was already too late. Only one in every 16 of Amsterdam's 90,000 Jews survived the war – one in seven in the Netherlands – the lowest proportion of anywhere in Western Europe.

The Dutch Resistance, set up by an unlikely alliance of Calvinists and Communists, only became large-scale when the increasingly desperate Germans began to round up able-bodied men to work in Germany.

Towards the end of the war, the situation in Amsterdam was dire. Coal shipments ceased, many men aged between 17 and 50 had gone into hiding or to work in Germany, public utilities halted, and the Germans began to plunder anything that could assist their war effort. Thousands of lives were lost to severe cold and famine. Canadian troops finally liberated the city in May 1945, in the final days of the war in Europe.

1813–14

The French are overthrown, and William VI of Orange is crowned as Dutch king William I. The Austrians relinquish their claims to the southern provinces, and the north and south are joined as the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

1830

With French help the southern provinces secede to form the Kingdom of Belgium. The country is not formally recognised by the Dutch government until 1839.

1865–76

A period of rapid economic and social change. The North Sea Canal is dug, the Dutch railway system expanded and socialist principles of government are established.

1914–20

The Netherlands remains neutral in WWI. Food shortages cripple the country, leading to strikes, unrest and growing support for the Dutch Communist Party.

1940

Germany invades the Netherlands. Rotterdam is destroyed by the Luftwaffe, but Amsterdam suffers only minor damage before capitulating. Queen Wilhelmina sets up a Dutch exile government in London.

1944–45

The Allies liberate the southern Netherlands, but the north and west of the country are cut off from supplies. Thousands of Dutch perish in the bitter 'Hunger Winter'.

## POST-WAR GROWTH (1945–62)

The city's growth resumed after the war, with US aid through the Marshall Plan. Newly discovered fields of natural gas compensated for the loss of the East Indies, which became independent Indonesia after a four-year fight. The focus of the harbour moved west towards the widened North Sea Canal. The long-awaited Amsterdam–Rhine Canal opened in 1952.

Massive apartment blocks arose in areas annexed west of the city to meet the continued demand for housing, made more acute by the demographic shift away from extended families. The massive Bijlmermeer housing project (now called the Bijlmer) southeast of the city, begun in the mid-1960s and finished in the 1970s, was built in a similar vein.

## CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1962–82)

Over the 80 years leading to the 1960s, Dutch society had become characterised by *verzuiling* (pillarisation), a social order in which each religion and political persuasion achieved the right to do its own thing, with its own institutions. Each persuasion represented a pillar that supported the status quo in a general 'agreement to disagree'. In the 1960s the old divisions were increasingly irrelevant, and the pillars came tumbling down, but not the philosophy that it spawned (see p30).

Amsterdam became Europe's 'Magic Centre', an exciting place where almost anything was possible. The late 1960s saw an influx of hippies smoking dope on the Dam, sleeping in the Vondelpark and tripping in the nightlife hot spots. At the universities, students demanded a greater say and, in 1969, occupied the administrative centre of the University of Amsterdam. The women's movement began a campaign that fuelled the abortion debate.

In the 1970s a housing shortage fuelled speculation. Free-market rents – and purchase prices – shot out of reach of the average citizen. Many young people turned to squatting in buildings left empty by (assumed) speculators. Legislation made eviction difficult, giving rise to *knokploegen* (fighting groups) of tracksuited heavies sent by owners to evict squatters by force. These new squatters, however, defended themselves with barricades and a well-organised support network.

'Ordinary' Amsterdammers, initially sympathetic towards the housing shortage, became fed up with the squatters, and by the mid-1980s, the movement was all but dead. Squatting still takes place now, but the rules are clear and the mood is far less confrontational.

## NEW CONSENSUS (1982–2000)

Twenty years after the cultural revolution began, a new consensus, epitomised by the amiable mayor, Ed van Thijn, emphasised a decentralised government. Neighbourhood councils were established with the goal of creating a more liveable city: integrating work, schools and shops within walking or cycling distance; decreased traffic; renovation rather than demolition; friendly neighbourhood police; a practical, nonmoralistic approach towards drugs; and legal recognition of homosexual couples. Social-housing construction peaked, with 40,000 affordable apartments easing the plight of 100,000 house hunters.

A combined city hall and opera house opened in 1986 on Waterlooplein, although opinions remain divided on its architectural success. Today it's known as the Stopera (p79) – a contraction of *stadhuis* (city hall) and opera, or of 'Stop the Opera' to its detractors.

## JEWISH AMSTERDAM

It's hard to overstate the role that Jews played in the evolution of civic and commercial life of Amsterdam. The first documented Jewish presence goes back to the 12th century, but it was expulsion from Spain and Portugal in the 1580s that brought a flood of Sephardic (Jews of Spanish, Middle Eastern or North African heritage) refugees.

As in much of Europe, Jews in Amsterdam were barred from many professions. Monopolistic guilds kept most trades firmly closed. But some Sephardim were diamond cutters, for which there was no guild. Other Sephardic Jews introduced printing and tobacco processing, or worked in similarly unrestricted trades such as retail on the streets, finance, medicine and the garment industry. The majority, however, eked out a meagre living as labourers and small-time traders, and lived in the Nieuwmarkt area, which developed into the Jewish quarter.

Yet Amsterdam's Jews enjoyed freedoms unheard of elsewhere in Europe. They were not confined to a ghetto and, with some restrictions, could buy property. Although the Protestant establishment sought to impose restrictions, civic authorities were reluctant to restrict such productive members of society.

The 17th century saw another influx of Jewish refugees, this time Ashkenazim (Jews from Europe outside of Iberia), fleeing pogroms in Central and Eastern Europe. Amsterdam became the largest Jewish centre in Europe, some 10,000 strong by Napoleonic times.

The guilds and all remaining restrictions on Jews were abolished during the French occupation, and Amsterdam's Jewish community thrived in the 19th century.

All that came to an end, however, with WWII. The Nazis brought about the nearly complete annihilation of Amsterdam's Jewish community. Before the war, about 140,000 Jews lived in the Netherlands, of which about 90,000 lived in Amsterdam, comprising 13% of the city's population. Only about 5500 of these Amsterdam Jews survived the war, barely one in 16.

Today there are roughly 41,000 to 45,000 Jews in the Netherlands; nearly half of them live in Amsterdam. Among Dutch Jews, the vast majority identify themselves as Jewish, although only about one-quarter belong to synagogues. More than half are nonpractising.

Amsterdam slang incorporates many terms of Hebrew or Yiddish origin, such as the alternative name for Amsterdam, Mokum (from *makom aleph*, the best city of all); the cheery goodbye, *de mazzel* (good luck); *gabber* (friend, 'mate') from the Yiddish *chaver*, companion; and the put-down *kapsones maken* (to make unnecessary fuss, from *kapshones*, which means self-importance).

By the early 1990s, families and small manufacturers, which dominated inner-city neighbourhoods in the early 1960s, had been replaced by professionals and a service industry of pubs, 'coffeeshops', restaurants and hotels. The ethnic make-up had changed too, with non-Dutch nationalities comprising over 45% of the population. The city's success in attracting large foreign businesses resulted in an influx of higher-income expats.

## TESTING TIMES (2001–PRESENT)

The first years of the new century have been ones of darkness and light for Amsterdam. After smouldering for years, a noisy debate erupted over the Netherlands' policy towards newcomers, which quickly led to a tightening of immigration laws. The limits of tolerance, a core value of Dutch identity, were called into question. Pim Fortuyn, a right-wing politician, declared the country 'full' before being assassinated in 2002 (see p44).

Social tensions flared in the wake of the Fortuyn murder, and the atmosphere darkened further as the Netherlands slid into recession following 9/11. The number of people leaving

1975

The Netherlands' drugs laws distinguish soft from hard drugs; possession of small amounts of marijuana is decriminalised. The Nieuwmarkt district becomes a battleground for squatters and police over the construction of the metro.

1980

Queen Beatrix marries German diplomat Claus von Arnsberg; the coronation is disrupted by a smoke bomb and riot on the Dam. The term 'proletarian shopping' (ie looting) enters the national lexicon.

2001

Same-sex marriage is legalised in the Netherlands, the first country in the world to do so. In the next few years Belgium, Spain, Canada and South Africa follow suit.

2002

Leading politician Pim Fortuyn, a hard-liner on immigration and integration, is assassinated. The ruling Dutch parties shift to the right after suffering major losses in the national election.

2004

Activist filmmaker Theo van Gogh, a fierce critic of Islam, is assassinated, touching off intense debate over the limits of Dutch multicultural society.

2006

The ruling coalition falls on a no-confidence motion against the immigration minister. After a see-saw election campaign the CDA is confirmed as the largest party, and Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende forms his fourth cabinet.

the country reached a 50-year high, albeit most departed for economic and family reasons. The mood was edgy, like a cauldron about to boil over.

It finally did in the autumn of 2004, when the filmmaker Theo van Gogh – known for his anti-Muslim views – was brutally murdered on an Amsterdam street (see the boxed text, p34). In a city famous for tolerance of other cultures, what did it mean that a native Amsterdammer, albeit of foreign descent, was behind this crime?

The leading political parties in the Netherlands responded with a big shift to the right. Many Dutch pondered whether immigrants were trying to force the traditions of their home countries onto the Netherlands. A poll in 2005 found that a majority of Dutch citizens favoured the banning of Islamic head scarves for public servants. The flow of immigrants has slowed to a trickle, yet more than 4% of the national population is still without Dutch nationality.

The clouds began to part in 2006. With immigration slowed, a sense of normalcy returned to everyday life, and the Dutch turned their sights to familiar issues such as health care and social services. Tourism and the economy have picked up, flashy new developments have sprung up around the perimeters of the city, and a new metro (underground) line is under construction from Amsterdam-Noord to the city's World Trade Centre. For the first time in years, according to local polls, the majority of Amsterdam's residents are happy with their jobs and have cause for optimism.

## CULTURE

Make no mistake, the Dutch have a flair for social engineering. The same nation that built its living rooms on a drained seabed also invented *verzuijing* (see p28). This meant not only more churches, but also separate radio stations, newspapers, unions, political parties, sport clubs and so on. The idea got a bit out of hand with pillarised bakeries, but it did promote social harmony by giving everyone a voice.

Although the pillars are less distinct today, they left a legacy of tolerance. Eccentric conduct in public might go without comment, hence the Dutch saying: 'Act normal, that's crazy enough.' Then, in a period of heightened social tensions a few years ago, two high-profile murders seemed to spell an end to a libertarian society (see the boxed text, p44). Amsterdam – the liberal city *par excellence* – was deeply troubled for a while.

But let's face it, tolerance is as Dutch as herring and ice skating, and what's more it's good for business. The same applies to its *gezelligheid*, that easy intimacy that comes out at the drop of a hat (see the boxed text, p182). Where other nations struggle to get the words out, the Dutch are irrepressibly sociable. Flight attendants leaving Amsterdam brace for garrulous Dutch congregating in the back of the plane, drinking and talking up a storm. Yet most people also value their privacy, and prefer to entertain friends at home.

The Dutch also have a moralistic streak (coming from the Calvinists) and a tendency to wag the finger in disapproval. The Dutch may seem stunningly blunt, but the impulse comes from the desire to be direct and honest. Yet even criticism can be dished out with a sense of humour. Amsterdammers, for instance, are quick to complain about their little city and their 'irrelevant' country, but always with a smile.

Dutch women are remarkably confident; on a social level, equality is taken for granted. Women are almost as likely to initiate contact with the opposite sex, although they can also be surprisingly old-fashioned (see the boxed text, *opposite*). It's still a different story in the workplace; relatively few women are employed full-time, and fewer still hold positions in senior management.

Gay and lesbians enjoy considerable freedom in Amsterdam. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not only illegal, but morally unacceptable; the police advertise in the gay media for applicants; the armed forces admit homosexuals on an equal footing. Most significantly, in 2001 the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriages, although this is a privilege reserved for local couples (see the boxed text, p207). Amsterdam was one of the first cities to court lesbian and gay travellers, hosting the Gay Games – the Olympics of the gay and lesbian world – back in 1988. Not that the welcome is universal: the last few years have seen a rise in gay-bashing incidents.

Now then, on to the sex and drugs. The ever-practical Dutch argue that vice is not going to go away, so you might as well control it. Sex is discussed openly (such as newspaper coverage of breast enhancement or genital piercing, with full-on photos). The Dutch parliament

## A BRIEF GUIDE TO DUTCH WOMEN

Marije, 30, is a doctor at one of Amsterdam's leading hospitals. Originally from the southern province of Brabant, she moved to Amsterdam recently after her studies at the University of Utrecht. We picked her brains for a profile of the Dutch female (listen up guys).

### How are Dutch women different from women in other industrialised countries?

There is a lot of emancipation. Many women in Holland try to combine a family with working life. But if you compare it with the Belgians, though, I think the Belgians do a nicer job, in sharing their family tasks. In Holland there somehow is still a strong tradition of the woman looking after the family, whereas the man works more.

### How do Dutch women dress? What is Dutch-specific?

I think Dutch women do not really like to dress up. If you go out in Amsterdam, you see that people dress nicely, but it's nothing really fancy. We're really down to earth in that sense, more into leisure wear – no high heels all day because they're uncomfortable. Having bicycle-friendly clothes is part of it. But on ball nights for students, you have to dress up and ride a bicycle, so it's really funny to see a guy in a white tie and a girl in evening dress on a bicycle.

### What do Dutch women like in men?

What some Dutch women daydream of is someone like Casanova, who really treats them like a woman and makes them feel special. But if you do that as a man, you're a macho type. I think Dutch women will find out they can't take it because they're way too emancipated for that. It's really hard to find a balance. They want macho but they can't be with a macho, because women have strong opinions of their own, how to organise their lives and so on. I think that's what Dutch women prefer. What they want in the end is someone to share the tasks at home. A really macho type is perhaps good for a short time, but not for life. It's hard for Dutch women to have a man who tells them what they can and cannot do.

### Is a Dutch woman likely to ask a man out?

Most Dutch women are rather traditional in that respect. It's still part of the game that most women prefer being asked out, though it's not forbidden to ask a guy out. Most Dutch women wait for men to take the first step.

### Are women here materialistic?

I don't think so. For example, if you look at Dutch housing, it's not so good compared to other countries because the supply of nice and affordable places to live is very small. We've just kind of accepted it. For example, I rent a 25 square metre bedroom-living room, and share the bathroom and kitchen. I'm all right with that. I don't need a lot of space or a lot of fancy stuff.

### Do Dutch women spend more than they used to on personal care?

I think it depends on the era. In the '90s we had a grunge period, and there wasn't so much make-up around. There were a lot of *spinnenvrouwen* (literally 'weaving women') with knitted sweaters and big boots. But now it's back in fashion to look nice and wear make-up, so it may just be a fashion thing. I think you also see that people dress up more in the south of Holland. In Amsterdam, it's less so; more down to earth.

### How equal are women to men in the business sphere?

It's true, in management it's still a man's world. Maybe because it's hard to get into higher management working part-time, as many Dutch women do. But in Dutch medicine there's a big change underway. The majority of the doctors are still men, but among medical students the ratio of female to male students is something like 70:30.

once held a debate on whether to ban a TV show called *How to Screw* (but decided to allow the broadcast). But promiscuity is the last thing on Dutch minds. It is perhaps revealing that only about 5% of Red Light District customers are Dutch. (The biggest group, by far, is the Brits.)

By the same token, marijuana and hashish are legal. You want to get high? Go ahead. Yet if you think everyone here gets stoned, you're wrong. Only a fraction of the population smokes dope, fewer people than in Britain, the USA and France, where drug policies are much stricter. On the other hand, the 'harder' drugs such as heroin, LSD, cocaine and ecstasy are outlawed, and dealers are prosecuted.

If you've seen workmen lay cobblestones in Amsterdam, you'll appreciate the Dutch have a great love of detail. Statistics on the most trivial subjects make the paper (eg the number of



pigeons on the Dam this year, incidence of rubbish being put out early), and somewhere down the line it feeds mountains of bureaucracy. That said, when the system breaks down the Dutch are happy to improvise a solution; this has to do with their history of juggling diverse interests.

Last but not least, the Dutch are famously thrifty with their money – and they often don't know what to think of this. In one breath they might joke about how copper wire was invented by two Dutchmen fighting over a penny – and in the next, tell you that they don't like being called cheap.

## ARTS

Strange how some of the world's best-known artists get by on just one name, like Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Even without this duo, the Netherlands have contributed more than their fair share of famous painters to the world's pantheons of art. The influence of these masters runs like a red thread through Dutch history and along the way, fostered a huge respect for artistic expression – music, the performing arts, graphics, photography and multimedia, for starters.

So in Amsterdam, it comes as little surprise to find the fine-arts scene is second to none, with an astounding 40,000 performances and events every year. This is a creative centre rather than just a caretaker of past traditions, and the enthusiasm shows on a daily basis.

In other cities, streets are named for political leaders or wealthy landowners, but Amsterdam has an entire section of town with streets named for artists and musicians. You only need to see the crowds at the concert halls, arts festivals, theatres and museums to gauge how much the arts matter to the everyday resident.

## PAINTING

With a line-up that includes Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Jan Vermeer, the Dutch Masters are some of world's best-known painters. Understanding them requires a bit of history, with roots going back to a time when Italy was the centre of the art world and painters would go there to study.

## Flemish & Dutch Schools

Prior to the late 16th century, when Belgium was still part of the Low Countries, art focused on the Flemish cities of Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp. Paintings of the Flemish School featured biblical and allegorical subject matter popular with the Church, the court and to a lesser extent the nobility, who, after all, paid the bills and called the shots.

Among the most famous names of the era are Jan van Eyck (1385/90–1441), the founder of the Flemish School who was the first to perfect the technique of oil painting; Rogier van der Weyden (1400–64), whose religious portraits showed the personalities of his subjects; and Hieronymus (also known as Jeroen) Bosch (1450–1516), with macabre allegorical paintings full of religious topics. Pieter Breugel the Elder (1525–69) used Flemish landscapes and peasant life in his allegorical scenes.

In the northern Low Countries, artists began to develop a style of their own. Although the artists of the day never achieved the level of recognition of their Flemish counterparts, the Dutch School, as it came to be called, was known for favouring realism over allegory. Haarlem was the centre of this movement, with artists such as Jan Mostaert (1475–1555), Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) and Jan van Scorel (1494–1562). Painters in the city of Utrecht were famous for using chiaroscuro (deep contrast of light and shade), a technique associated with the Italian master Caravaggio.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Figures are for Amsterdam unless otherwise noted.

- Population: 743,000
- Netherlands population: 16,370,000
- Population aged 34 and younger: 47%
- Single-person households: 55%
- Households of couples without children: 20%
- Households of couples with children: 15%
- Single-parent households: 10%
- Number of nationalities in Amsterdam: 174
- Non-Western foreigners: 34%
- Western foreigners: 14%
- First generation with non-Dutch backgrounds: 28%
- Ethnic Moroccans: 65,000
- Ethnic Surinamese: 70,000
- Ethnic Turks: 38,000
- Native Dutch: 383,000

## Golden Age (17th Century)

When the Spanish were expelled from the Low Countries, the character of the art market changed. There was no longer the Church to buy artworks and no court to speak of, so art became a business, and artists were forced to survive in a free market – how very Dutch. In place of Church and court emerged a new, bourgeois society of merchants, artisans and shopkeepers who didn't mind spending money to brighten up their houses and workplaces. The key: they had to be pictures the buyers could relate to.

Painters became entrepreneurs in their own right, churning out banal works, copies and masterpieces in factory-like studios. Paintings were mass-produced, sold at markets alongside furniture and chickens. Soon the wealthiest households were covered in paintings from top to bottom. Foreign visitors commented that even bakeries and butcher shops seemed to have a painting or two on the wall. Most painters specialised in one of the main genres of the day.

Then there was Rembrandt van Rijn (see the boxed text, [below](#)), who defied easy classification. The greatest and most versatile of 17th-century artists, he excelled in all artistic categories. Sometimes he was centuries ahead of his time, particularly with the emotive brush strokes of his later works.

Another great painter of this period, Frans Hals (1581/85–1666), was born in Antwerp but lived in Haarlem, just west of Amsterdam. He devoted most of his career to portraits, dabbling in occasional genre scenes with dramatic chiaroscuro. His ability to capture his

## REMBRANDT: LAUDED, REVILED, GENIUS

The 17th century's greatest artist, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) grew up a miller's son in Leiden, but had become an accomplished painter by his early twenties.

In 1631 he came to Amsterdam to run the painting studio of the wealthy art dealer Hendrick van Uylenburgh. Portraits were the studio's cash cow, and Rembrandt and his staff (or 'pupils') churned out scores of them, including group portraits such as *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp*. In 1634 he married Van Uylenburgh's niece Saskia, who often modelled for him.

Rembrandt fell out with his boss, but his wife's capital helped him buy the sumptuous house next door to Van Uylenburgh's studio (the current Museum Het Rembrandthuis, [p78](#)). There Rembrandt set up his own studio, with staff who worked in a warehouse in the Jordaan. These were happy years: his paintings were a success and his studio became the largest in Holland, though his gruff manner and open agnosticism didn't win him dinner-party invitations from the elite.

Rembrandt became one of the city's biggest art collectors; a master manipulator not only of images, the painter was also known to have his own pictures bid up at auctions. He often sketched and painted for himself, urging his staff to do likewise. Residents of the surrounding Jewish quarter provided perfect material for his dramatic biblical scenes.

In 1642, a year after the birth of their son Titus, Saskia died and business went downhill. Although Rembrandt's majestic group portrait *The Nightwatch* (1642) was hailed by art critics (it's now the Rijksmuseum's prize exhibit), some of the influential people he depicted were not pleased. Each subject had paid 100 guilders, and some were unhappy at being shoved to the background. In response, Rembrandt told them where they could shove their complaints. Suddenly he received far fewer orders.

Rembrandt began an affair with his son's governess but kicked her out a few years later when he fell for the new maid, Hendrickje Stoffels, who bore him a daughter, Cornelia. The public didn't take kindly to the man's lifestyle and his spiralling debts, and in 1656 he went bankrupt. His house and rich art collection were sold and he moved to the Rozenegracht in the Jordaan.

No longer the darling of the wealthy, Rembrandt continued to paint, draw and etch – his etchings on display in the Rembrandthuis are some of the finest ever produced. He also received the occasional commission, including the monumental *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* (1661) for the City Hall, although authorities disliked it and had it removed. In 1662 he completed the *Staalmeesters* (the 'Syndics') for the drapers' guild and ensured that everybody remained clearly visible, though it ended up being his last group portrait.

The works of his later period show that Rembrandt had lost none of his touch. No longer constrained by the wishes of clients, he enjoyed new-found freedom; his works became more unconventional yet showed an ever-stronger empathy with their subject matter, as for instance in *A Couple: The Jewish Bride* (1665). The many portraits of Titus and Hendrickje, and his ever-gloomier self-portraits, are among the most stirring in the history of art.

A plague epidemic in 1663–64 killed one in seven Amsterdammers, including Hendrickje. Titus died in 1668, aged 27 and just married, and Rembrandt died a year later, a broken man.

## THEO VAN GOGH

Obituaries for Theo van Gogh, famously murdered on an Amsterdam street in November 2004, refer to him as a filmmaker, but that's too simple. He was a provocateur, personality, gadabout and, above all, deeply charismatic.

Van Gogh was born in Den Haag in 1957 (a distant relative of that *other* Theo van Gogh – the painter's brother) but made his home in Amsterdam. When, as a young man, he applied for admission to the Dutch Film Academy, he was rejected and advised to see a psychologist. His first film, *Lüger* (1980), included images of a pistol being inserted into a woman's vagina and (faked) footage of kittens in a clothes dryer. After the premiere, one audience member spat in Van Gogh's face.

He made 25 films over the years, some of little distinction, although his greatest box-office success *06* (also called *1-900* in some territories; 1994), about a phone-sex relationship, was the top-grossing Dutch film of the year.

Van Gogh seemed to enjoy spending as much time in front of the camera as behind it, especially the act of tweaking others about the nose. He appeared on a 'VIP' version of *Big Brother*. In articles and speeches and on his website *The Happy Smoker* (he chain-smoked), he took positions at odds with most people in the Netherlands – in favour of cruise missiles, George W Bush, the war in Iraq – and predicted the assassination of Pim Fortuyn (p44). He enraged the local Jewish community by saying that they made too much of Auschwitz.

But his most famous diatribes – which ultimately did him in – were reserved for Muslim immigrants, regularly referring to Moroccans as 'goatf\*\*kers'. His last book, *Allah weet het beter* ('Allah knows best'; 2003), was as cynical as the title implies.

*Submission: Part 1* was Van Gogh's last film, four stories in 11 unflinching minutes showing how verses from the Koran could be used to justify violence against women.

Yet for all Van Gogh's biting and bluster, the moments immediately before his death were telling. After he was knocked off his bike by the first bullet, he is quoted as saying to his attacker: 'We can still talk about it.' For details of the murder, see p44.

subjects' expressions was equal to Rembrandt's, though he didn't explore their characters as much. Both masters used the same expressive, unpolished brush strokes and their styles went from bright exuberance in their early careers to dark and solemn later on. Hals' work was also admired by the 19th-century Impressionists. In fact, his *The Merry Drinker* (1630) in the Rijksmuseum's collection, with its bold brush strokes, could almost have been painted by an Impressionist.

Hals also specialised in beautiful group portraits in which the participants were depicted in almost natural poses, unlike the rigid line-ups produced by lesser contemporaries – though he wasn't as cavalier as Rembrandt in subordinating faces to the composition. A good example is the pair of paintings known collectively as *The Regents & the Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* (1664) in the Frans Hals Museum (p229) in Haarlem. It was a space Hals knew intimately; he lived in that almshouse, and now it's the museum.

The grand trio of 17th-century masters is completed by Johannes (also known as Jan) Vermeer (1632–75) of Delft. He produced only 35 meticulously crafted paintings in his career and died poor with 10 children; his baker accepted two paintings from his wife as payment for a debt of more than 600 guilders. Yet Vermeer mastered genre painting like no other artist. His paintings include historical and biblical scenes from his earlier career, his famous *View of Delft* (1661) in the Mauritshuis in Den Haag, and some tender portraits of unknown women, such as the stunningly beautiful *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1666), also in the Mauritshuis.

Vermeer's work is known for serene light pouring through tall windows. The calm, spiritual effect is enhanced by dark blues, deep reds, warm yellows and supremely balanced composition. Good examples include the Rijksmuseum's *The Kitchen Maid* (also known as *The Milkmaid*, 1658) and *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (1664), or, for his use of perspective, *The Love Letter* (1670). *The Little Street* (1658) in the Rijksmuseum's collection is Vermeer's only street scene.

Around the middle of the century, the focus on mood and subtle play of light began to make way for the splendour of the baroque. Jacob van Ruysdael (c 1628–82) went for dramatic skies and Albert Cuyp (1620–91) for Italianate landscapes. Van Ruysdael's pupil Meindert Hobbema preferred less heroic, more playful scenes full of pretty bucolic detail. (Note that Cuyp, Hobbema and Ruysdael all have main streets named after them in the Old South and De Pijp districts, and many smaller streets here are named after other Dutch artists.)

The genre paintings of Jan Steen (1626–79) show the almost frivolous aspect of baroque. Steen was also a tavern-keeper, and his depictions of domestic chaos led to the Dutch expression 'a Jan Steen household'. A good example is the animated revelry of *The Merry Family* (1668) in the Rijksmuseum; it shows adults having a good time around the dinner table, oblivious to the children in the foreground pouring themselves a drink.

## 18th & 19th Centuries

The Golden Age of Dutch painting ended almost as suddenly as it began, when the French invaded the Low Countries in 1672. The economy collapsed and the market for paintings went south with it. Painters who stayed in business concentrated on 'safe' works that repeated earlier successes. In the 18th century they copied French styles, pandering to the awe for anything French.

The results were competent but not ground-breaking. Cornelis Troost (1697–1750) was one of the best genre painters, sometimes compared to the British artist William Hogarth (1697–1764) for his satirical as well as sensitive portraits of ordinary people; Troost, too, introduced scenes of domestic revelry into his pastels.

Gerard de Lairesse (1640–1711) and Jacob de Wit (1695–1754) specialised in decorating the walls and ceilings of buildings – de Wit's *trompe l'oeil* decorations (painted illusions that look real) in the Theater Instituut Nederland (p93) and Bijbels Museum (p95) are worth seeing.

The late 18th century and most of the 19th century produced little of note, save for the landscapes and seascapes of Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819–91) and the gritty, almost photographic Amsterdam scenes of George Hendrik Breitner (1857–1923). They appear to have inspired French Impressionists, many of whom visited Amsterdam.

Jongkind and Breitner reinvented 17th-century realism and influenced the Hague School of the last decades of the 19th century. Painters such as Hendrik Mesdag (1831–1915), Jozef Israëls (1824–1911) and the three Maris brothers (Jacob, Matthijs and Willem) created landscapes, seascapes and genre works, including the impressive *Panorama Mesdag* (1881), a gigantic, 360-degree cylindrical painting of the seaside town of Scheveningen viewed from a dune.

Without a doubt, the greatest 19th-century Dutch painter was Vincent van Gogh (1853–90), whose convulsive patterns and furious colours were in a world of their own and still defy comfortable categorisation. (A post-Impressionist? A forerunner of Expressionism?) For more about his life and works, see the Van Gogh Museum (p109).

## De Stijl

In his early career, Piet Mondriaan (1872–1944) – he dropped the second 'a' in his name when he moved to Paris in 1910 – painted in the Hague School tradition, but after flirting with Cubism he began working with bold rectangular patterns, using only the three primary colours (yellow, blue and red) set against the three neutrals (white, grey and black). He named this style 'neoplasticism' and viewed it as an undistorted expression of reality in pure form and pure colour. His *Composition in Red, Black, Blue, Yellow & Grey* (1920), in the Stedelijk Museum's collection, is an elaborate example.

Mondriaan's later works were more stark (or 'pure') and became dynamic again when he moved to New York in 1940. The world's largest collection of his paintings resides in the Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum) in his native Den Haag.

The famously strict artist was one of the leading exponents of De Stijl (The Style), a Dutch design movement that aimed to harmonise all the arts by bringing artistic expressions back to their essence. Its advocate was the magazine of the same name, first published in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931). Van Doesburg produced works similar to Mondriaan's, though he dispensed with the thick, black lines and later tilted his rectangles at 45 degrees, departures serious enough for Mondriaan to call off the friendship.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, De Stijl also attracted sculptors, poets, architects and designers. One of these was Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964), designer of the Van Gogh Museum and several other buildings, but best known internationally for his furniture, such as the *Red Blue Chair* (1918) and his range of uncomfortable zigzag seats that, viewed side-on, formed a 'Z' with a backrest.

One of the most remarkable graphic artists of the 20th century was Maurits Cornelis Escher (1902–72). His drawings, lithos and woodcuts of blatantly impossible images continue to fascinate mathematicians: a waterfall feeds itself; people go up and down a staircase that ends where it starts; a pair of hands draw each other. You can see his work at Escher in het Paleis in Den Haag.

## CoBrA & Beyond

After WWII, artists rebelled against artistic conventions and vented their rage in abstract expressionism. In Amsterdam, Karel Appel (1921–) and Constant (Constant Nieuwenhuis, 1920–2005) drew on styles pioneered by Paul Klee and Joan Miró, and exploited bright colours and ‘uncorrupted’ children’s art to produce lively works that leap off the canvas. In Paris in 1945 they met up with the Danish Asger Jorn (1914–73) and the Belgian Corneille (Cornelis van Beverloo, 1922–), and together with several other artists and writers formed a group known as CoBrA (COpenhagen, BRussels, Amsterdam). It’s been called the last great avant-garde movement.

Their first major exhibition, in the Stedelijk Museum in 1949, aroused a storm of protest (‘My child paints like that too’). Still, the CoBrA artists exerted a strong influence in their respective countries even after they disbanded in 1951. The CoBrA Museum (p131) in Amstelveen displays a good range of their works, including colourful ceramics.

Contemporary Dutch artists are usually well represented at international events such as the Biennale in Venice and the Documenta in Kassel. Look out for the installations of Jan Dibbets (1941–) and Ger van Elk (1941–), who mix photography, painting and sculpture, as well as the wry graphic illustrations of Marthe Röling (1939–). Among the younger generation, the artist duo Liet Heringa (1966–) and Van Kalsbeek (1962–) are known for their moody, free-form sculptures, Michael Raedecker (1963–) for his dreamy, radiant still lifes, Roger Braun (1972–) for industrial realism and Melvin Moti (1977–) for films of spookily lit objects (think exploding soap bubbles).

## PHOTOGRAPHY

For obvious reasons photography does not have the history of painting in Amsterdam, but what it lacks in longitude it makes up for in latitude. The area of the Jordaan around the Elandsgracht brims with photography studios and small galleries, while the museums FOAM (p99) and Huis Marseille (p95) specialise in photography.

Portraiture is a major theme of contemporary Dutch photography. The most famous living photographer from the Netherlands is probably Anton Corbijn (1955–), known for his portraits of celebrities and musicians such as Naomi Campbell, Mick Jagger and Martin Scorsese, often in his trademark grainy black-and-white.

Rineke Dijkstra (1959–) creates unflinching head-on portraits, both analytical and empathetic, of common people such as soldiers carrying rifles and folks in bathing suits on the beach. Hellen van Meene’s (1972–) portraits are more intimate, such as a series commissioned by the *New York Times* featuring pubescent Japanese girls, innocent with a tinge of eroticism. Inez van Lamsweerde (1963–) and Vinoodh Matadin (1961–), both born and educated in Amsterdam, create shots for exhibitions and advertising campaigns, at turns grim and glamorous.

Amsterdam-based Aernout Mik (1962–) has exhibited in Europe and North America with film installations known for their combining of studies in group dynamics with a sculptor’s sense of space. Marijke van Warmerdam (1959–), based in Amsterdam and New York, creates absurdist loops of everyday life in repeating sequences – eg the Japanese technique of bowing.

## MUSIC

The dour church elders began to allow organ music in churches in the 17th century, as it kept people out of pubs. With the possible exception of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), an organ player in the Oude Kerk with an international reputation as a composer and a strong following in Germany, Amsterdam has contributed relatively little to the world’s music heritage.

Today, however, the world’s top acts appear here regularly and local musicians excel in (modern) classical music, jazz and techno/dance. In summer, free jazz, classical and world-music performances are staged in the Vondelpark, and free lunch-time concerts are held at various

venues throughout the year. The Uitmarkt festival (p18) at the end of August also provides lots of free music. For more about music venues see p197, and check the free entertainment papers for details.

## Classical

The Netherlands has orchestras in cities throughout the country, but Amsterdam’s Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, p199) towers over them all, not least because of the near-perfect acoustics of its winning concert hall, the Concertgebouw (p111). The orchestra’s director since 2004 is Mariss Jansons, whose long list of credentials includes the Pittsburgh Symphony. The orchestra also frequently performs abroad, matching works by famous composers with little-known gems of the modern era. If you’re looking to catch one of the top-flight soloists in the world, head here first.

The Concertgebouw is only one of several venues in town for classical music. Chamber music plays in the Beurs van Berlage, and very often the city’s extant or converted churches host concerts. Check listings.

If you’re looking for Dutch home-grown talent, you can hardly do better than the mop-topped pianist Ronald Brautigam, who has performed around the country and all over the world. Violinist-violist Isabelle van Keulen founded her own chamber music festival in Delft, and brings in the crowds wherever she appears. The country’s leading cellist is Pieter Wispelwey, known for his fiery temperament and a challenging repertoire.

Pianist Wibi Soerjadi is one of the country’s most successful classical musicians, famous for his sparkling interpretations of romantic works and his Javanese-prince looks. Soerjadi recently played a concert during a state visit of Queen Beatrix to Slovakia. Soprano Charlotte Margiono is known for her interpretations of *Le Nozze de Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*. Mezzo-soprano Jard van Nes has a giant reputation for her solo parts in Mahler’s symphonies.

For ‘old music’ you shouldn’t miss the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, concentrating on the music of the 17th and 18th centuries (Bach, Vivaldi and Handel; venues vary). The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (ABO) and Choir, conducted by Ton Koopman, tackled an enormous task of recording all existing cantatas of JS Bach. The ABO tours internationally but, when home, can often be seen performing at the Concertgebouw. Koopman also conducts the Radio Chamber Orchestra and guest conducts with orchestras worldwide.

Performances by the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra are often recorded for radio and TV; one of its former artistic directors, Frans Brüggen, also works with the Orchestra on 18th-century pieces.

The Nederlandse Opera is based in the Stopera (officially called the Muziektheater; p200), where it stages world-class performances, though its forays into experimental fare stir up the inevitable controversy.

## Modern Classical & Experimental

The new Muziekgebouw aan ‘t IJ (p125) is the venue for this sort of work which seems to thrive in Amsterdam. This iconic building occupies a prime spot on the waterside, near the Passenger Ship Terminal.

Dutch modern composers include Michel van der Aa, Louis Andriessen, Theo Loevendie, Merlijn Twaalfhoven, Klaas de Vries and the late Ton de Leeuw. Worthwhile performers include the Trio, Asko Ensemble, Ives Ensemble, Nederlands Kamerkoor, Nieuw Ensemble, the Mondriaan Kwartet and the Schönberg Quartet.

## Jazz

The Dutch jazz scene has produced some mainstream artists in recent years. Among gifted young chanteuses are Fleurine, Ilse Huizinga and the Suriname-born Denise Jannah, who records for Blue Note and is widely recognised as the country’s best jazz singer. Jannah’s repertoire consists of American standards with elements of Surinamese music.

Astrid Seriere and Carmen Gomez operate in the crossover field, where jazz verges on, or blends with, pop. Father and daughter Hans and Candy Dulfer, tenor and alto saxophonists respectively, are a bit more daring. Dad, in particular, constantly extends his musical boundaries



by experimenting with sampling techniques drawn from the hip-hop genre. Candy is better known internationally, thanks to her performances with Prince, Van Morrison and Pink Floyd, among others, which have introduced her to a wide audience.

Trumpeter and Jorjaan native Saskia Laroo mixes jazz with dance, but still earns respect in traditional circles. Other leading jazzers are bass player Hein van de Geyn, guitarist Jesse van Ruller and pianist Michiel Borstlap, winner of the Thelonius Monk award. Borstlap was commissioned by the Emir of Qatar to write the world's first opera in Arabic.

An effervescent soloist on the flute is Peter Guidi, who set up the jazz programme at the Muziekschool Amsterdam and leads its big band, Jazzmania. Other big bands of renown are the Willem Breuker Kollektief and Contraband, both enjoying a reputation for experimentation.

The most important jazz venue is Bimhuis (p197) in the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ. A number of smaller clubs congregate in the streets east of the Leidseplein. For the biggest party with the biggest names in tow, check out the North Sea Jazz Festival (p18) every summer in Rotterdam.

## Pop & Rock

Chances are you've heard oldie hits by Dutch bands such as 'Radar Love' by Golden Earring, 'Venus' by Shocking Blue or 'Hocus Pocus' by Jan Akkerman's Focus. The highest-profile Dutch rock star, Herman Brood, captured punk hearts with *His Wild Romance* at the end of the '70s. Later, the Dutch became pioneers in club music, fusing techno and industrial into the dark, hyperactive beat that became known as 'gabber'.

Nowadays Amsterdam is the pop capital of the Netherlands, and talent is drawn to the city like moths to a flame. It is a major hub of the DJ trade, not just for the Netherlands but for the world. Top names on the international circuit include Tiësto, Armin van Buuren, Marco V and Ferry Corsten. You can find them at venues large and small in town, although tickets sell out fast.

Hot new stars of the pop scene include the Britpop-inspired Moke, singer-songwriter Marique Jäger, the punk-jazz group Malkovich as well as those dance-rock mavens, the Melomanics. Among rappers, the popular Moroccan-Dutch artist Ali B has recently teamed up with top-40 singer Marco Borsato, a fixture at pop festivals. Also look out for the Dutch-rapping Osdorp Posse, Brainpower, and Blaxtar.

Some oldie bands still on the circuit include the garagerock outfit Claw Boys Claw, and the pop legends Doe Maar and Tröckener Kecks, who were among the first to break through with lyrics in Dutch, rather than English.

Pop festivals come out of the woodwork in the warmer months: Pinkpop (p17) in Landgraaf and the gargantuan Parkpop (p17), which draws around 350,000 ravers to Den Haag. Dance Valley (p18) in Spaarnwoude near Amsterdam pulls up to 100 live acts and DJs.

## World Music

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam offers a wealth of world music. Suriname-born Ronald Snijders, a top jazz flautist, is a frequent highlight as is the venerable Chris Hinze, another flautist with an eclectic repertoire that ranges from New Age to Tibetan music.

The bulk of world repertoire from Amsterdam is Latin, ranging from Cuban salsa to Dominican merengue and Argentinean tango. But Fra-Fra-Sound plays jazz and 'paramaribop', a contraction of Paramaribo (the capital of Suriname) and bebop. What you'll hear is traditional Surinamese *kaseko*, itself a banquet of African, European and American music.

Another intriguing band is Zuco 103, a Dutch-Brazilian outfit that combines bossa nova and samba with DJ rubs on the turntable. It has strong ties with the equally eclectic New Cool Collective, a 19-piece big band that blends jazz with drum'n'bass and '60s Go-Go. It recorded a soundtrack for the live-action version of the film *The Jungle Book* to rave reviews.

Sources to check out while you are in Amsterdam include the foundation [Marmoucha](http://www.marmoucha.nl) (www.marmoucha.nl), which organises 60-odd Moroccan performances a year; Laziz (for Arabian dance music, often at Paradiso), Que Pasa (Spanish ska, reggae and more, often at Melkweg) and Club Mahsen (Turkish dance music, at various locations). See p196 for details of club venues.

The Amsterdam Roots Festival of world music happens at different locations every year in June, but centres on the Oosterpark – see [www.amsterdamroots.nl](http://www.amsterdamroots.nl) for details. The Tropeninstituut Theater (p199) often hosts non-Western music concerts.

## CINEMA

Dutch films haven't exactly set the world on fire, though this has more to do with the language barrier and funding problems in a modest distribution area than with lack of talent.

In the mid-1990s, the Dutch government introduced tax shelters to encourage private investment in Dutch film, which led to a mini-boom in the industry. Lightweight fare such as *Costa!* (2001), about Dutch teenagers on holiday in a Spanish resort, recently proved that Dutch films crafted for the domestic audience could be commercially viable. The film spawned copycat films such as *Volle Maan (Full Moon)* and a TV sitcom.

The best-known Dutch director is Amsterdam-born Paul Verhoeven, who was famous at home long before making Hollywood blockbusters such as *Total Recall*, *Basic Instinct* and *Starship Troopers*. Lately Verhoeven returned to the Netherlands to shoot *Black Book*, the highest-grossing Dutch film ever (see p40 for an interview with him).

Look out for screenings at the key film festivals: the Rotterdam International Film Festival in February, Utrecht's Netherlands Film Festival in September (with the Golden Calf awards, the 'Dutch Oscars'), and Amsterdam's excellent International Documentary Film Festival in November. Handily for foreign visitors, movies are rarely ever dubbed into Dutch, but subtitled (see p200 for cinema venues).

The following is a shortlist of critically acclaimed Dutch films, both contemporary and historical, that afford insights into Dutch society.

*Amsterdamned*, directed by Dick Maas, 1987. A skin-diving serial killer is chased through Amsterdam's canals by a detective hampered by his fear of water. Essentially a B-grade thriller pepped up by great shots of Amsterdam.

*Antonia* (Antonia's Line), directed by Marleen Gorris, 1995. A strong-willed Dutch woman recalls life in a colourful village where men become increasingly irrelevant. Won an Oscar for best foreign film.

*De Aanslag* (The Assault), directed by Fons Rademakers, 1986. A physician spends his adult life investigating why his neighbours betrayed his family in WWII. Based on a best-selling novel by renowned author Harry Mulisch, it was nominated for an Academy Award.

*De Tweeling* (Twin Sisters), directed by Ben Sombogaart, 2004. A touching story of twins separated in the Netherlands and Germany during WWII; nominated for an Oscar.

*Fanfare*, directed by Bert Haanstra, 1958. Made by one of the greats of Dutch documentary film, this classic satire is about two amateur brass bands vying for a government grant in a small Dutch town.

*Interview*, directed by Theo van Gogh, 2003. Low-key account of a war correspondent conducting an interview with a soap opera actress. Attracted little attention until after the filmmaker's death (see the boxed text, p34); an American remake was released in 2007.

*Shouf Shouf Habibi* (Hush Hush Baby), directed by Albert ter Heerdt, 2004. Comedy about a Moroccan family finding its way in Dutch society. Takes a cynical look at the integration issue without taking sides.

*Simon*, directed by Eddy Terstall, 2004. A complicated friendship develops when a hetero hash dealer hits a gay man with his car. A Golden Calf winner.

*Turks Fruit* (Turkish Delight), directed by Paul Verhoeven, 1973. A distressed sculptor (Rutger Hauer) picks up numerous women to forget the loss of his wife. The most successful Dutch film of the '70s, it's regarded as a modern classic.

*Zus & So*, directed by Paula van der Oest, 2001. Comedy about three sisters who plot to sabotage the engagement of their gay brother for material gain. Also Oscar-nominated.

*Zwartboek* (Black Book), directed by Paul Verhoeven, 2006. This action-packed story explores some of the less heroic aspects of the Dutch resistance in WWII. Launched the international career of today's hottest Dutch actor, Carice van Houten.

## THEATRE

Amsterdam has a rich theatrical tradition dating back to medieval times. In the Golden Age, when Dutch was the language of trade, local companies toured the theatres of Europe with the tragedies of Vondel, the comedies of Bredero and verses of PC Hooft. They're still performed locally, even if there's precious little in English translation.

When it's not touring abroad, De Dogtroep stages fancy and unpredictable 'happenings' in quirky venues such as the Passenger Ship Terminal. Each show is supported by flashy multimedia effects and technical gadgetry, with every set specially developed by a team of designers and



## BEHIND THE BLACK BOOK: THE PAUL VERHOEVEN INTERVIEW

Before he traded Holland for Hollywood in the mid-1980s, Paul Verhoeven left his mark on Dutch cinema with acclaimed films such as *Turkish Fruit* and *Soldier of Orange*, his first wartime drama. In an interview with Lonely Planet, the director of *Robocop* and *Basic Instinct* talks about his fascination with the Dutch resistance and his 2006 hit movie, *Black Book*.

### Why was there so much time between the making of *Soldier of Orange* and *Black Book*?

When it's about realistic movies, I try to do a lot of research. I look at photos, documentaries, newsreels and hundreds of books. I did the same this time, together with my scriptwriter, Gerard Souteman. We co-wrote *Soldier of Orange* and *Black Book*. We're both history buffs, and it was a pleasure to dive into the archives at the Institute of War Documentation in Amsterdam. We did that very thoroughly in the late '70s, for the *Soldier of Orange*.

A lot of the details in *Black Book* happened in 1944–45. But our hero in *Soldier of Orange* was the author of the autobiography, Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema, portrayed by Rutger Hauer. He left Holland in 1941–42 and only came back after the war. So basically that period, that strange, dark, shadowy period of betrayal, collaboration and executions left and right, where Den Haag – where I was living at the time – was the centre of the German occupying government and the Dutch National Socialist Party in Holland.

### What did you do with all the research that you weren't able to use?

I couldn't use a lot of things I knew for *Soldier of Orange*, simply because they hadn't happened yet. In 1941–42 there wasn't much violent confrontation between the Dutch and the Germans. A lot of Dutch felt, 'Let's see how it goes.' Many people weren't too upset by the occupation, were thinking, 'Well maybe Holland will become a part of Germany, perhaps that's fine.' Also they were trying to see whether it would all be combined into a kind of European Union. In fact, the Dutch National Socialist Party tried to do that at the time.

But the fireworks happened later, when the Germans realised they were losing the war. The Resistance in Holland became a really powerful force and was continuously sabotaging and shooting Germans. But that started only after the German defeat at Stalingrad. Only then did people in Holland start to think, the Germans can be defeated, and asked for weapons from London and became more violent and confrontational. That period is *Black Book*.

### You have described *Black Book* as a correction to the *Soldier of Orange*. In what sense?

I would say it's more the other side of the story. *Soldier of Orange* is based on historical biographical material; there aren't enormous lies there. *Soldier of Orange* is pretty much the reality of that person at that time. But it was more a correction historically, because *Soldier of Orange* wasn't the entire war. *Soldier of Orange* is the beginning of the war, *Black Book* is the end of the war.

Different things happened at the end than at the beginning. The character in *Soldier of Orange*, who is basically Roelfzema, is the man who did all these things. He's treated in Holland today as a genuine war hero, a Resistance hero like Jean Moulin in France. He is very respected. But all that he wrote is just one side of the coin. There are two ways to look at the war: in the heroic way, or in the subversive way, not so heroic, where people are not so reliable, where there is a lot of cheating and opportunism.

painters. A spin-off, Warner & Consorten, stages dialogue-free shows that inject humour into everyday situations and objects, while music is generated with weird materials.

Cosmic (p202) deserves special mention for productions reflecting the city's multicultural communities (Surinamese, Indonesian etc). The comedy scene is led by English-language outfits such as Boom Chicago (p201).

English-language companies often visit Amsterdam, especially in summer. Glitzy musicals play to full houses in the Koninklijk Theater Carré (p105) or other large venues.

The Dutch also produce some of the world's best youth theatre. The delightful puppets of the Marionetten Theater (p201) provide classic operas from Mozart, Haydn and Offenbach a fairytale charm.

The Holland Festival (p17), Over Het IJ (p18) and the Uitmarkt (p18) are big theatre events. Also worth catching is the International Theatre School Festival (p18) at the end of June, in the theatres around Nes (Frascati, Brakke Grond etc).

Those who wish to dig deeper can visit the Theatre Museum in the Theater Instituut Nederland (p93).

### Do you feel that *Black Book* fills a gap in the Dutch educational system?

Clearly. The movie is used in high schools together with an educational book for young people who know nothing about the war, to tell people in Holland what kind of things happened, what the background and political situation was; which parties combined with others and so on. I think the movie provoked a lot of interest among the Dutch about what happened 60 years ago. That was not the sole purpose of the movie, which I wanted to make because it's a great story. I like it because so much is based on real events. I wanted to get away from science fiction in Hollywood, and this served the purpose really well. We were aware that there would be interest from the educational system, and we were asked if there could be a book to go with the movie to instruct people about the Second World War.

### After the film came out, were you surprised that the Dutch did not react more negatively to the way they were portrayed?

Yes, because provocation and problems with the audience have pursued me in my career. *Spetters* in Holland, or *Showgirls*, *Basic Instinct* or even *Starship Troopers*. There has always been some turmoil in the reception of my movies. *Black Book* was really revealing, like putting your dog's nose in the shit, showing the Dutch in a harsh way what kind of things happened in Holland at the end of the war and even worse, after the war. There was always the possibility that people would not accept it, be violently against it or say, 'This is all a lie, we never did this' or 'We were much nicer people, you make us look filthy and unreliable and collaborating and treacherous'. But the Dutch were educated or adult enough to accept the movie and the historical elements I used.

### Has there been a change in how the Dutch see their role in WWII?

Over the last 10 to 15 years there have been a lot of scholarly publications about these years of the war, and these things have been discussed in the newspapers. Much had been absorbed by the Dutch audience by the time the film came out. They were surprised to see these things, but I don't think it was shocking to them. I think they knew the Dutch didn't behave wonderfully in the last few years of the war, especially as regards the Jewish population. Holland let many Jews go without much protest, or an attempt to keep them in Holland. The Dutch handed over a bigger percentage of the Jewish population than anywhere else in Europe. This has been acknowledged, that we didn't do much for the Jewish population. Queen Beatrix even apologised in Israel for Dutch behaviour towards the Jewish population. The Dutch accepted it completely, and the film was an enormous success in Holland.

### What do you miss most about the Netherlands, as you live in Los Angeles?

After I shot the film and lived in Holland again for 1½ years, I feel there is clearly a contrast between life in the United States and Holland. The fact is that access to people socially is much easier in Europe than in the United States. I think it's much easier to get in touch with people without announcing it, you don't have to prepare a visit. Of course I have an enormous number of friends in Holland, much more than in the United States and an enormous social network. And in Holland there is a lot of laughing, you know?

## DANCE

Amsterdam's **National Ballet** ([www.het-nationale-ballet.nl](http://www.het-nationale-ballet.nl)) performs mainly classical ballets, but also presents 20th-century works by Dutch choreographers such as Rudi van Dantzig and Toer van Schayk. The Ballet has helped launch the careers of promising dancemasters such as John Wisman and Ted Brandsen, now the artistic director.

The Netherlands is also a world leader in modern dance, and many innovative performances can be seen throughout the year. The troupe of the Nederlands Dans Theater in Den Haag leaps and pirouettes to international audiences.

There are also many smaller modern-dance companies such as Introdans, which can truly be described as poetry in motion. The Holland Festival in June is the main platform for premieres of new shows by top choreographers, while Amsterdam's Julidans festival (p18) in July brings dancers together from all over the world. The International School Festival held in June is devoting more of its programme to dance, and performances are often held in one of the theatres along Nes (p77).

## LITERATURE

The following books are written by local authors or are set in or near Amsterdam. Of these books originally written in Dutch, all are available in English thanks to the [Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund](#) ([www.nlpvf.nl](http://www.nlpvf.nl)), which propagates Dutch literature abroad.

*Amsterdam Cops* is a series of detective novels by Janwillem van de Wetering, with tongue firmly in cheek. The author writes every novel such as *The Perfidious Parrot* twice, in Dutch and English, in order to peg his target audience.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* is a moving account of a young girl's thoughts and yearnings while in hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam (see [p94](#)). The book has been translated into 60 languages, and is a fixture of school curricula across the globe.

*A Dutchman's Slight Adventures*, by Simon Carmiggelt, is an amusing collection of vignettes about De Pijp from the author's column in the newspaper *Het Parool*. Carmiggelt was a master of local colour, often writing his observations from pubs and park benches in Amsterdam.

*Girl with a Pearl Earring*, by Tracy Chevalier, explores the conflicts between duty and sexuality. Set in Delft, the story was made into a Hollywood movie starring Colin Firth (as Jan Vermeer) and Scarlett Johansson (as a maid in his employ), and offers insights into a painter's life in the Golden Age.

*The Happy Hooker*, by Xaviera Hollander, is a revealing snapshot of the ins and outs of the sex trade. Though it may seem tame now, in the '70s some countries banned the book for its graphic content.

*Lost Paradise*, by Cees Nootboom, is an allegorical tale of angels and humans, of Brazilians in Australia and a literary critic in Austria. One of the Netherlands' most prolific writers, Nootboom also wrote *The Following Story*, winner of the Aristeion European Prize for Literature in 1991.

*Parents Worry*, by Gerard Reve, is a contemporary classic, a tragicomic novel about a day in the ravaged life of a singer and poet with one hell of a case of writer's block. Reve, who passed away in 2006, was acknowledged as one of the great 20th-century Dutch authors.

*The UnDutchables*, by Colin White and Laurie Boucke, is a point of reference for virtually anyone who goes to live in the Netherlands. These two Americans have discovered foibles that many Dutch themselves seem not to recognise.

## RED-LIGHT READS

American author John Irving (*The World According to Garp*, *The Cider House Rules*) set his novel *A Widow for One Year* in Amsterdam's Red Light District, and the British novelist Irvine Welsh (*Trainspotting*, *Porno*) wrote *The Acid House*, a short-story collection about Amsterdam's drug underworld.

## Recycling & Waste

The Netherlands is well known for being forward-thinking with recycling. It was one of the first countries to ban the import of electronic equipment with components that degrade and cause environmental harm. In a similar vein, buyers of appliances pay an upfront fee that takes care of recycling later. The environmental group Stichting Milieunet organises the cost-free pick-up of recyclable materials, covering everything from retired boats, caravans and construction materials to crashed-out bicycles – of which Amsterdam has an endless supply.

However, if you're walking around looking for a place to recycle your half-litre bottle of water you'll be looking for a long time. There are recycling bins for *papier* (paper) and *glas* (glass), but the rest goes into the bin conveniently marked 'rest'. Metal cans, on the other hand, are extracted from rubbish by separation techniques. In theory, plastic bottles are supposed to be either biodegradable or (like glass receptacles) are sold on deposit and returned for refund. (Bottles don't need to be returned to the same point of sale.) To cut down on waste, most supermarkets charge a small fee for grocery bags, though you're free to bring your own.

In residential areas, nifty garbage receptacles are built right in to the sidewalk. A truck comes along, the receptacles rise out of the ground and are replaced.

The system of portable *urinoirs* is about as clever. During peak periods, trucks drop off the tall plastic stands (with four open niches) and pick them up when full. The idea is to stop *wildplassen* ('wild peeing'), but it's also cheaper than paying €0.50 to use a public toilet. Major drawback? There's no women's equivalent.

## URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

For many people, the dream of a cosy home with a canal view remains just that: a dream. Amsterdam's rents are the fourth-highest in Europe; only London, Paris and Rome are more expensive. A cramped, reasonably central one-bedroom apartment will cost €450 or more a month, and although cheaper options are available through housing corporations, residents face a wait of up to five years.

No wonder Amsterdam's urban planners are constantly looking for extra space. Millions are being invested to renovate housing in older districts such as Amsterdam-Oost, but this alone won't be enough: by 2030 the city's population is expected to swell by 100,000.

Help is on the way. The shores along the IJ river are becoming the city's new dormitories. Thousands of homes have emerged in the Eastern Docklands, a former industrial area. Northwest of Centraal Station – itself getting a big makeover (see [p70](#)) – lies the Westerdokeiland, an imposing clutch of flats, offices and cafés embracing a pleasure harbour; to the northeast is Oosterdokeiland, an A1 office location with housing and a home to the new Openbare Bibliotheek (Amsterdam public library; [p71](#)). Across the river in Amsterdam-Noord there's Overhoeks, a housing estate on the old Shell Oil compound that will soon border the future Filmmuseum ([p115](#)). Long shunned by Amsterdammers and city planners alike, Amsterdam-Noord may be the urban hot spot of tomorrow, especially once the new metro line is completed.

This is a departure from not so long ago, when satellite communities such as Almere and Purmerend were seen as the solution. Residents are now being lured no further than the outskirts for fresh, open-layout designs, with all the mod cons and public transport links.

The *Noord/Zuidlijn* (north-south metro line) neatly ties into these plans. When completed in 2013, the extension will cut travel times between Amsterdam-Noord and the southern districts, changing the way many people live and work. The route also runs through the Zuidas ('south axis'), a minimetropolis that is the city's answer to London's Canary Wharf.

## HEAD & SHOULDERS ABOVE

The Dutch are the tallest people in the world, averaging 1.855m (6ft, 1in) for men and almost 1.73m (5ft, 8in) for women. Copious intake of milk proteins, smaller families and superior prenatal care are cited as likely causes, but researchers also suspect there is some magic fertiliser in the Dutch gene pool. Whatever the reason, the Dutch keep growing, as do their doorways. Today, the minimum required height for doors in new homes and businesses is 2.315m (7ft, 6in).

## ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

Much of the Amsterdam region is polder, land that once lay at the bottom of lakes or the sea. It was reclaimed by building dykes across sea inlets and rivers, and pumping the water out with windmills (later with steam and diesel pumps). Without these techniques the Netherlands would be a much smaller, and certainly wetter, place than it is today.

Polders were created on a massive scale: in the 20th century, huge portions of the former Zuiderzee (now the IJsselmeer, a lake closed off from the sea by a dyke) were surrounded by dykes and the water was pumped out to create vast swaths of flat and fertile agricultural land. Opened in 1986, the province of Flevoland, northeast of Amsterdam, would be the last province to be reclaimed from the sea.

## GREEN AMSTERDAM

The city centre is both very green and very much not. The central streets of Damrak, Rokin and Spuistraat, for example, feel like brick jungles, but virtually any canal is a lush green belt. Another place to spot greenery is through the rear window: many homes in the Canal Belt back onto gardens or courtyards.

To let loose, your best bet is the large open field of Museumplein ([p111](#)), or the lovely Vondelpark ([p115](#)) nearby, both just south of the city centre. A short ride away is the Amsterdamse Bos ([p131](#)). Don't neglect the large and lovely Artis Zoo ([p121](#)), the city's first park, in the Plantage district. You can also seek out the leafy refuges called *hofjes* (inner courtyards), especially in the Jordaan district (see the boxed text, [p85](#)).

## GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Amsterdam is the capital city, and it certainly looks and feels like one. But due to a quirk of history, the functions of state are actually 60km away in Den Haag (The Hague).

The national government is presided over by the prime minister, currently Jan Peter Balkenende, in a coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Christian Union (CU) parties, and the labour party (PvdA). Regarded as squeaky clean in Amsterdam, Balkenende has seen the political landscape shift markedly but managed to form a fourth cabinet (in as many years) following a surprise re-election in November 2006. A previous cabinet was brought down earlier that year by a crisis surrounding Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a parliamentary member and critic of Islam (see the boxed text, [below](#)). Ali, who was born in Somalia, resigned after it was revealed she provided false information to the Dutch authorities when applying for asylum.

The opposition is made up of seven parties including the centre-right, market-friendly People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), as well as two vocal right-wing parties, the Socialist Party (SP) and the PVV (Party for Freedom). The head of the PVV, Geert Wilders, is considered by many to carry the torch of Pim Fortuyn, the right-wing populist assassinated in 2002.

The national government has made some conciliatory noises on immigration recently, for example by granting an amnesty in 2007 to 30,000 immigrants without papers to give them a chance to be registered legally. Still, the admission of immigrants is now restricted to a few narrow categories, such as people whose skills serves the 'national interest'.

Other key issues include a new smoking ban in restaurants, bars and cafés, due to come into force in mid-2008 ([p188](#)) as well as the ongoing containment of coffeeshops. The city of Rotterdam is closing over one-third of its coffeeshops, saying they are too close to schools; Amsterdam, with 200 coffeeshops of its own, has decided not to follow suit – for now.

Amsterdam's mayor, currently Job Cohen, is appointed by the monarchy. The 45-member city council is elected to four-year terms by the city's 15 boroughs. Since the 2006 election, which showed a strong shift back to the left, the government is run by a coalition of the PvdA and GroenLinks (Green Left Party), with four parties holding seats in opposition. Council

### THE LEGACY OF THEO & PIM

If the 2004 assassination of Theo van Gogh rocked Amsterdam, it was the assassination of Pim Fortuyn two years earlier that gave the initial push.

The political career of the charismatic Fortuyn (pronounced fore-town) lasted a mere five months, yet his impact on the Netherlands has proved indelible. His campaign for parliament in 2002 is best remembered for his speeches on immigration: particularly that the Netherlands was 'full' and that immigrants should not be allowed to stay without learning the language or integrating. Thousands of white, low-income earners in Fortuyn's home base of Rotterdam and other cities rallied round the gay, dandyish former university professor. Fortuyn was feted as the next prime minister, even as his opponents accused him of pursuing right-wing, racist policies.

Just days before the general election in May 2002, Fortuyn was assassinated by an animal-rights activist in Hilversum, some 20km from Amsterdam. Riots erupted outside parliament, and for a brief instant the threat of anarchy hung in the air. His political party, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), had a number of members elected to parliament and was included in the next coalition, but without the dynamic Fortuyn it sputtered in search of a leader; in the 2003 election, voters all but deserted the LPF, which voted itself out of existence in 2007.

Enter Theo van Gogh ([p34](#)), a filmmaker whose 11-minute documentary *Submission Part 1* featured four short stories about Koranic verses that could be interpreted as justifying violence against women. The film was a collaboration with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Muslim-born woman who had emigrated from Somalia to escape an arranged marriage and eventually became a member of parliament. Hirsi Ali had become an outspoken critic of Islamic law and declared herself an atheist.

The documentary aired on Dutch TV in 2004, and Van Gogh was shot and his throat slashed as he was cycling down an Amsterdam street in rush hour. A letter threatening the nation, politicians and Hirsi Ali in particular, was impaled on a knife stuck in Van Gogh's chest. Hirsi Ali went into hiding. The killing was all the more shocking to locals because the 27-year-old killer, while of Moroccan descent, was born and raised in Amsterdam. He proclaimed that he was acting in the defence of Islam and would do the same thing again if given the chance, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment (one of only a few dozen life sentences in the Netherlands since WWII).

If Fortuyn and his assassination set minds thinking in this city, Van Gogh's murder was a blow to the heart. It also galvanised politicians to require immigrants to know something about Dutch culture before moving to the land of tolerance.

(Continued on page 53)

(Continued from page 44)

members receive an allowance for their work and not a salary, as it is performed on a volunteer basis. The council meets every second Wednesday in public session.

The city is further divided into boroughs, each with its own council and its own political flavour. Frequently, the locals create informal councils to solve problems of mutual concern, even without any government input. A good example is the Night Mayors, a board of volunteers organised by a city-centre councilman to promote Amsterdam's nightlife and mediate between the entertainment industry and the authorities.

## MEDIA

It makes sense that the world's first museum devoted to news photography, News Photo ([p94](#)) opened here. Amsterdammers are media savvy and voracious readers. All you need to do is go to a café with a reading table to see. Whether it's a newspaper picked up on their commute or the latest hot blog, people are, above all else, aware. It makes this small city seem even smaller.

Of the 35 or so daily newspapers published in the Netherlands, some of the most important are based or have bureaus in Amsterdam. *De Telegraaf* is the country's biggest-selling newspaper and the closest thing to a tabloid you'll find. The *NRC Handelsblad* is the intellectual paper, while readers of the *Volkskrant* are decidedly left of centre.

*Het Parool* is Amsterdam's afternoon newspaper, the one to grab to know what's happening in town. Its Saturday *PS* supplement has a great entertainment section. And if you want to impress an Amsterdammer, say the restaurant you've chosen for dinner was rated nine out of 10 by Johannes van Dam, the paper's food critic.

The fastest-growing sector belongs to four free daily papers: *Metro*, *Spits*, *De Pers* and *Dag*, all of which are distributed from train-station stands. With a circulation of over half a million copies daily, *Metro* alone is a force to contend with. Visitors will have little trouble finding English-language publications such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *International Herald Tribune* and many UK-based dailies. Many are also popular among Dutch readers. See [p248](#) for further info.

Dutch TV tends not to travel well abroad, mostly due to the language, but foreign-language remakes of Dutch shows are enormously popular. Many visitors expect Dutch TV to be stuffed to the gills with porn, but it just ain't the case. The reality-TV craze began here with *Big Brother*, produced by Endemol, now based in Amsterdam. *Big Brother* was swiftly copied in the UK, Germany and the USA – and has spread to places as diverse as Brazil, Mexico and Africa. Its latest creation is the controversial *Gouden Kooi* (Golden Cage), a tempestuous soap opera cum reality show where participants are locked up together in a house for year. One resident regularly ordered the services of prostitutes. Endemol is also behind such international hits as *Fear Factor*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *Ready, Steady, Cook*.

Of the local TV stations, AT5 is the putative leader thanks to its wall-to-wall coverage of local news. For a dose of Amsterdam attitude, tune in to low-budget MokumTV, on the air with local documentaries and unvarnished opinions since 1982. The state-owned networks are Ned 1, Ned 2 and Ned 3, who battle it out with commercial channels such as NET5, the loud 'n' sassy Yorin and Veronica, and the RTL empire. You can also find plenty of foreign channels on cable, including the BBC and CNN, and the sky's the limit via the satellite services at many hotels.

## LANGUAGE

When you come from a tiny country with a long history of trade, you learn to adapt or wither.

Amsterdam has always looked outward, and as a result most people you will encounter

### THE DONOR SHOW HOAX

In the summer of 2007, BNN, a TV station aimed at the youth audience, took the reality-show concept a step further with *The Big Donor Show*. The programme involved a woman, supposedly terminally ill, who was to donate a kidney to one of three worthy recipients, with the decision left up to the viewing audience. The whole thing turned out to be a hoax and there was a storm of criticism, including from Dutch prime minister, Jan Peter Balkenende. BNN agreed the show was in bad taste, but argued it wanted to highlight the lack of donors. Within days of the airing, the producers emerged victorious as tens of thousands of viewers requested a donor form.

## LEARNING THE LINGO

Originally from Bolivia, Sonia Sanchez has lived in Amsterdam for over seven years and works for the city council's section on immigration affairs. We asked about her views on the immigration law passed in 2005, which requires competency in the Dutch language and culture before newcomers can get a residency permit.

### Tell us what it was like for you when you first arrived in Amsterdam.

When I first arrived my Dutch wasn't very good, so I took several language courses. It was difficult, but I managed, and that helped me get my university diploma, a residency permit and a job offer. Now it's very different. Apart from the language, you have to take an orientation course in Dutch culture, and for that you have to study an awful lot.

### What percentage of people pass the Dutch language test?

I don't know exactly, but last year 4000 immigrants came to Amsterdam to live. Of those who enrol in the standard 1½-year language course, typically something like 70% don't make it to the second level. A lot of immigrants work and study at the same time, and it's more difficult than a lot of them expect. But that was still under the old system. There's a new test in force from this year.

### Is it demeaning for immigrants who've lived here for some time to prove they speak Dutch?

Those who already have a Dutch passport aren't required to take the test. But people without a Dutch passport do have to, and I think it's a good idea. I know people who have lived here for 30 years and don't speak a word of Dutch. How does that happen? They live separate from the rest of society, and think, why should they learn Dutch if they don't use it every day? The problem is, their children don't perform well at school. There are special language programmes for the parents, which help to motivate the children to learn the language too.

### Have the courses in Amsterdam been successful so far?

Under the new immigration law, Amsterdam and other Dutch cities were given time to prepare their administration, so the courses here only started in April 2007. So we won't see any concrete test results until late 2008.

### Is it so necessary to speak Dutch in Amsterdam, when so many Dutch are polyglot?

I think when you move to another country, you should learn the language or you'll miss out on a lot. When I arrived in Amsterdam I noticed that everyone here speaks English, even the greengrocers. When I was learning Dutch at first and I tried to speak it, everyone answered back in English, but I had to convince them I wanted to improve my Dutch.

### How many people in Amsterdam need to improve their Dutch?

In Amsterdam there are about 50,000 people with substandard Dutch. Not just foreigners, mind you – there are also some Dutch who are technically illiterate.

### What happens if a prospective immigrant fails the language and culture test?

Those already in the Netherlands can retake it, but have to pass within five years of arrival. For immigrants who haven't moved here yet, it's tougher. They have to contact the Dutch embassy in their homeland and take the test *before* they come, which means learning all the language and culture stuff abroad. Not easy.

in the city speak English very well. Foreign films and TV are shown with Dutch subtitles, and the Dutch have long used other languages in their dealings overseas. Many websites (especially tourist publications) are published in English, with the occasional publication in German, French, Italian and, increasingly, Turkish and Arabic.

Part of the reason for this outward focus may be that the Dutch language is confounding. Many linguists believe that Dutch is a close relative to English, but it won't be apparent to the uninitiated. If you've studied German, Dutch will make sense grammatically, and once you get past some spelling differences you'll probably be able to get the gist of it, especially written. Spoken Dutch is another matter entirely – its pronunciation is a minefield of diphthongs (vowel combinations), throat-clearing *g*'s and *ch*'s, roiling, rolling *r*'s and *v*'s that sound like *f*'s.

The Dutch speak English so well that visitors will rarely have the opportunity to practice Dutch. When they do, the most valiant attempts at pronunciation will probably be met with quizzical looks. Nevertheless, a few words in Dutch are always appreciated, especially the phrase *Spreekt u Engels?* (Do you speak English?) with older people. Foreigners who have settled in the Netherlands report that speaking Dutch, while hardly compulsory, warms their Dutch friends and colleagues.

For a brief guide to Dutch and some useful words and phrases, see the Language chapter (p258), and check language courses on p245. For more extensive coverage of the language, pick up Lonely Planet's *Western Europe Phrasebook*.





# ARCHITECTURE



*Arcam (p70), the comely architecture centre at the harbour's edge*

# ARCHITECTURE IN AMSTERDAM



The peaceful Begijnhof (p68)

## top picks SEEWORTHY BUILDINGS

- Oude Kerk (p75)
- Nieuwe Kerk (p66)
- Royal Palace (p67)
- Rijksmuseum (p111)
- Het Schip (p130)
- Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (p125)

**It is difficult not to be struck by Amsterdam's well-preserved beauty; the lovely canalscapes depicted in centuries-old paintings are remarkably unchanged. Historian Geert Mak once described Amsterdam as 'a Cinderella under glass', spared as it was from wartime destruction and ham-fisted developers. The comely old centre has no fewer than 7000 historical monuments, more humpback bridges than Venice and more trees per capita than Paris.**

Unlike many capitals, Amsterdam has few grand edifices to trumpet. There is hardly the space for a Louvre or Westminster Abbey, which anyway would be out of keeping with Calvinist modesty. But you'll be pressed to find another city with such a wealth of residential architecture, and with an appeal that owes more to understated elegance than to power and pomp.

Amsterdam's beauty was built on freedoms – of trade, religion and aesthetics. Many of its gabled mansions and warehouses were erected by merchants in the Golden Age, with little meddling by city hall. Thus its leading citizens determined the look of the city, an early urban experiment.

Dutch architecture today is one of the country's most successful exports, with names such as Rem Koolhaas and Lars Spuybroek popping up on blueprints from Shanghai to Stuttgart. Back home, rivalry can be intensely local as talents in Amsterdam and Rotterdam jostle for a spot in the architectural pantheon.

## MIDDLE AGES

Around the year 1200, Amsterdam was a muddy little trading post on the Amstel river. The soft marshland couldn't support brick, so the earliest houses were made of timber, often with clay and thatched roofs – similar, actually, to ones still standing in Amsterdam-Noord. Even these modest abodes would list into the soggy ground.

A disastrous fire burnt down much of the city centre in the 15th century, and wood was sensibly outlawed as a main building material. There was plenty of clay to make brick, but this was too heavy, let alone stone.

The engineers solved the problem by driving piles into the peat. So timber gave way to heavier brick, and thatched roofs were replaced by sturdier tile. Eventually brick and sandstone became *de rigueur* for everything.

Only two early houses with timber façades have survived to this day. In a lovely courtyard near the Spui, the house at [Begijnhof 34](#) (Map pp62–5) is the oldest preserved wooden house in the country, dating from 1465. The other specimen can be found at Zeedijk 1, home of the [In 't Aepjen café](#) (p183), from the mid-16th century.

The city's oldest surviving building is the [Oude Kerk](#) (Old Church, 1340; p75), a fine specimen of Dutch brick Gothic style. The second-oldest is the [Nieuwe Kerk](#) (New Church; p66), a late-Gothic masterpiece from the early 15th century. You can clearly see how, over time, the Catholic choir and altar ceded ground to the Protestant pulpit. In both churches, notice the wooden roof frames.

Another classic of the era is the [Montelbaanstoren](#) (p82), one of the city's signature buildings and a Rembrandt favourite. The octagonal steeple was designed by master architect Hendrick de Keyser to house a clock that's still in use today.



The Gothic-style Oude Kerk (p75)

## GABLES, HOISTS & HOUSES THAT TIP

Among Amsterdam's great treasures are the magnificent gables, the façades at roof level that adorn the elegant houses along the canals. The gables hid the roof from public view and helped to identify the house until 1795, when the French occupiers introduced house numbers. Gables then became more of a fashion accessory.

There are four main types: the simple [spout gable](#), with diagonal outline and semicircular windows or shutters, that was used mainly for warehouses from the 1580s to the early 1700s; the [step gable](#), a late-Gothic design favoured by Dutch Renaissance architects; the [neck gable](#), also known as the bottle gable, a durable design introduced in the 1640s; and the [bell gable](#), which appeared in the 1660s and became popular in the 18th century.

Many canal houses deliberately tip forward. Given the narrowness of staircases, owners needed an easy way to move large goods and furniture to the upper floors. The solution: a hoist built into the gable, to lift objects up and in through the windows. The tilt allowed loading without bumping into the house front. Some properties even have huge hoist-wheels in the attic with a rope and hook that run through the hoist beam.

The forward lean also makes the houses seem larger, which makes it easier to admire the façade and gable – a fortunate coincidence for everyone. Other house features included wall tablets; see the boxed text, [p48](#).



Gabled buildings



## DUTCH RENAISSANCE

As the Italian Renaissance filtered north, Dutch architects developed a rich ornamental style that merged the classical and the traditional, with their own brand of subtle humour. They inserted mock columns, known as pilasters, into the façades and replaced the old spout gables with step gables (see the boxed text, p47). Sculptures, columns and little obelisks suddenly appeared all over the Canal Belt. Red brick and horizontal bands of white were all the rage too.

The best-known talent of this period was Hendrick de Keyser (1565–1621), the city sculptor. He worked with Hendrick Staets, a Canal Belt planner, and Cornelis Danckerts, the city bricklayer, to produce some of the city's finest masterpieces.

Every student of Dutch architecture knows the **Bartolotti House** (p94), a design by De Keyser, who also put his stamp on three 'directional churches': the **Zuiderkerk** (Southern Church; p80) and **Westerkerk** (Western Church; p93), both Gothic in flavour, and the **Noorderkerk** (Northern Church; p85), built for poor Jordaanders, and laid out like a Greek cross inside, a veritable revolution at the time.

De Keyser also created the landmark **Munttoren** (Mint Tower; Map pp62-5; cnr Rokin & Singel). The national mint was moved here ahead of advancing French troops in 1673, but had little time to print any currency.

Also attributed to De Keyser is the **Rasphuis Gate** (p73). Halfway along Heiligeweg, it once led to the Rasphuis, a model penitentiary where inmates would 'rasp' (scrape) Brazil wood for the dye industry.

### WALL TABLETS

Before street numbers were introduced in 1795, many Amsterdam homes were identified by their wall tablets. These painted or carved stone plaques were practical decorations that earmarked the origin, religion or profession of the inhabitants.

Beautiful examples of these stones are still found on many buildings along the main canals. Occupations are a frequent theme: tobacconists, milliners, merchants, skippers, undertakers, even grass-mowers.

The tablets also provide hints about the city's past. A stone depicting a mail wagon at Singel 74 commemorates the start of postal services between Amsterdam and Den Haag in 1660. Further down the street, there's one portraying the scene of Eve tempting Adam with an apple, harking back to a fruit market of yesteryear.

Many plaques celebrate the lives of famous citizens, such as maritime hero Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter and biologist Jan Swammerdam. The most appealing, however, recall the domestic life and vocations of the age; for examples, see [www.amsterdamsegevelstenen.nl](http://www.amsterdamsegevelstenen.nl).



Wall tablets were used to identify houses

Key commercial buildings include the **Greenland Warehouses** (Map pp62-5; Keizersgracht 40-44). Whale oil was a sought-after ingredient for soap, lamp oil and paint, and wells in these warehouses held 100,000L of the precious stuff. Nowadays they're chic apartments, the façade is well maintained.

The wonderful **Huis aan de Drie Grachten** (House on the Three Canals, 1609; Map pp62-5; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 329) marks where the three *burgwallen* (fortified embankments) meet. Note the house's steep gables, leaded glass windows and handsome shutters.

## DUTCH CLASSICISM

During the Golden Age of art in the 17th century, architects such as Jacob van Campen, Philips Vingboons and his brother Justus decided to stick to Greek and Roman classical design, dropping many of De Keyser's playful decorations.

Influenced by Italian architects, the Dutch made façades look like temples and pilasters like columns. All revolved around clever deception. Neck gables with decorative scrolls came into fashion, often crowned by a temple-like roof. Garlands appeared under windows, and red brick, which was prone to crumbling, was hardened with dark paint.

The most impressive example of Dutch Classicism is Van Campen's city hall (now the **Royal Palace**, p67). The largest city hall in Europe, it was given a precious shell of Bentheim sandstone and a marble interior inspired by the Roman palaces.

The Vingboons designed the **Bijbels Museum** (p95), the **White House** (now also part of the Theater Instituut Nederland, p93) and the fine example at **Keizersgracht 319** (Map p92).

Justus Vingboons' **Trippenhuis** (p79) is about as austere as it gets. Built in 1660–64 for the wealthy Tripp brothers, who made their fortune in metals, artillery and ammunition, the most striking hallmarks are up at roof level – chimneys shaped like mortars.

Later in the 17th century, façades became plainer as the pendulum shifted to sumptuous interiors. Adriaan Dortsman, a mathematician by training, was a leader of this austere style. Dortsman's greatest hits include the **Ronde Lutherse Kerk** (Round Lutheran Church; p73) and the **Museum Van Loon** (p99).

## 18TH-CENTURY 'LOUIS STYLES'

As Holland's trading might faded, the wealthy fell back on fortunes amassed in the mercantile era. Many invested or turned to banking, and conducted business from their opulent homes. Traders no longer stored goods in the attic because they could no longer afford warehouses elsewhere.

The Gallic culture craze proved a godsend for architect and designer Daniel Marot, a Huguenot refugee who introduced matching French interiors and exteriors to Amsterdam. Living areas were bathed in light that fell through sash windows on white stuccoed ceilings. As the elegant bell gable became a must, many architects opted for the next big thing, a horizontal cornice.

The dignified façades and statuary of the Louis XIV style hung on until about 1750. In rapid succession it was followed by Louis XV style – rococo rocks, swirls and waves – and Louis XVI designs, with pilasters and pillars making a comeback.



The towering Westerkerk (p93)

Magna Plaza (p72), with the Royal Palace (p67) in the background







Ornate archway of the Rijksmuseum (p111), the gateway to the Museum Quarter

Standing in front of the late-Louis-style [Felix Meritis Building](#) (p94), step back and note the enormous Corinthian half-columns, with a pomp that architect Jacob Otten Husly was skilled in imparting.

The [Maagdenhuis](#) (Map pp62–5) on the Spui, designed by city architect Abraham van der Hart, is a more sober brand of this classicism. Built in 1787 as a Catholic orphanage for girls, the building is now the administrative seat of the University of Amsterdam.

## 19TH-CENTURY NEOSTYLES

After the Napoleonic era, the Dutch economy stagnated, merchants closed their pocketbooks and architecture ground to a halt. Seen as safe and saleable, neoclassicism held sway until the more prosperous 1860s, when planners again felt free to rediscover the past.

The late 19th century was all about neo-Gothic, harking back to the grand Gothic cathedrals, and the neo-Renaissance. It was around this time that Catholics regained their freedom to worship openly, and built churches like mad in neo-Gothic style.

A leading architect of the period was Pierre Cuypers, the man known for skilful design blur on several neo-Gothic churches, something he had in common with CH Peters. Their contemporary AC Bleijs created some of the greatest commercial buildings of the era.

Pierre Cuypers designed two of Amsterdam's iconic buildings: [Centraal Station](#) (p70) and the [Rijksmuseum](#) (p111), which both display Gothic forms and Dutch Renaissance brickwork. A similar melange is CH Peters' general post office, now [Magna Plaza](#) (p72).

The ebullient neo-Renaissance façade of the [former milk factory](#) (Map pp100-1; Prinsengracht 739-741) was built in 1876 to a design by Eduard Cuypers (Pierre's nephew).

Bleijs designed the high-profile [St Nicolaaskerk](#) (p71) as well as the intimate [PC Hooft Store](#) (1881; Map pp100-1; Keizersgracht 508). The latter, a Dutch-Renaissance throwback with a Germanic tower, was built to commemorate the 300th birthday of the poet and playwright Pieter Cornelisz Hooft.

The façade of AL van Gend's [Concertgebouw](#) (p111) is neoclassical, but its red brick and white sandstone are all Dutch Renaissance.

Around the turn of the century, the neo-Goths suddenly fell out of favour as Art Nouveau spread its curvy plant-like shapes across Europe.

Art Nouveau's influence can be seen in the [Greenpeace Building](#) (Map p92; Keizersgracht 174-176). The towering edifice was built in 1905 for an insurance company, and its tiled façade shows a guardian angel who seems to be peddling a life policy.

Other Art Nouveau structures are the [Amsterdam American Hotel](#) (p99) and the riotous [Tuschinski theater](#) (p200).

## BERLAGE & THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

The father of modern Dutch architecture was Hendrik Petrus Berlage (1856–1934). He criticised the lavish neostyles and their reliance on the past, instead favouring simplicity and a rational use of materials.

In Berlage's view, residential blocks were a holistic concept rather than a collection of individual homes. Not always popular with city elders, Berlage influenced what became known as the Amsterdam School and its leading exponents Michel de Klerk, Piet Kramer and Johan van der Mey.

The titans of the Amsterdam School designed buildings of 'Plan South', an ambitious project mapped out by Berlage. Humble housing blocks became brick sculptures with curved corners, odd windows and rocket-shaped towers, to the marvel (or disgust) of traditionalists.

It was a productive period that ushered in a new philosophy of city planning, given a boost by the 1928 Olympic Games held in Amsterdam.

The [Beurs van Berlage](#) (p69) displayed the master's ideals to the full, with exposed inner struts and striking but simple brick accents.

Johan van der Mey's remarkable [Scheepvaarthuis](#) (p71) was the first building in the Amsterdam School style. It draws on the street layout to reproduce a ship's bow.

De Klerk's [Het Schip](#) (p130) in the Haarlem Quarter and Kramer's [De Dageraad](#) (p120) in the De Pijp neighbourhood are like fairy-tale fortresses rendered in a Dutch version of Art Deco. Their eccentric details are charming, but the 'form over function' ethic meant these places were not always fantastic to live in.



The tiled façade of the Greenpeace Building (opposite)

Museumplein, with view of the Concertgebouw (p111)





## FUNCTIONALISM

As the Amsterdam School built, a new generation began to rebel against the movement's impractical and expensive methods. In 1927 they formed a group called 'de 8', influenced by the Bauhaus, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.

Architects such as Ben Merkelbach and Gerrit Rietveld believed that form should follow function and advocated steel, glass and concrete. The Committee of Aesthetics Control didn't agree, however, which is why you'll see little functionalism in the Canal Belt.

After WWII, entire suburbs such as the sprawling Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam-Zuidoost were designed along functionalist lines. By the late 1960s, however, resistance would grow to such impersonal, large-scale projects.

Rietveld left Amsterdam the [Van Gogh Museum \(p109\)](#), where the minimalist, open space allows the artist's works to shine. You can enjoy coffee inside his [M Café \(p169\)](#). Aldo van Eyck's work also remains controversial, with critics arguing it looks out of place against the 17th- and 18th-century surrounds; his designs include the [Moederhuis \(Map p122; Plantage Middenlaan 33\)](#), built for 'fallen women'.

## THE PRESENT

Since the 1970s, designers have lent human scale to the suburbs by integrating low- and medium-rise apartments with shops, schools and offices. In the Plantage district, a must-see is the enormous [Entrepotdok \(p123\)](#). Sprawling half a kilometre along the former loading dock, the crusty shipping warehouses have been recast as desirable apartments, studios and commercial spaces. Nearby, the Eastern Docklands was full of derelict industrial buildings until the 1980s and early '90s, when they got a new lease on life.

Looking southeast from Centraal Station, you can't overlook the green copper snout of [NEMO \(p69\)](#), a science museum designed by Renzo Piano that resembles the prow of a ship. The cube-like glass shell of the [Muziekgebouw \(p125\)](#) stands not far to the north, on the IJ waterfront. Clad in a voluptuous body of aluminium and glass, [Arcam \(Architectuur Centrum Amsterdam; p70\)](#) is a tribute to the city's architectural prowess.

The Eastern Harbour District is home to the innovative community called [IJburg \(Map p58-9\)](#), which will eventually house many thousands of residents on a string of artificial islands. It's linked to the mainland by the curvaceous [Enneüs Heerma Brug](#), now dubbed Dolly Parton Bridge by locals. Amsterdam-Zuidoost prides itself on the [Living Tomorrow Pavilion \(p131\)](#), a 'smart' building with talking appliances by star architect Ben van Berkel.

Sweeping new projects are underway outside the old centre. On the shores of the IJ stands the [Oosterdokseiland](#), a row of landmark buildings that includes the new city library, and the [Westerdokeiland](#), a harbour that has been repurposed for work, play and sleep. On a former industrial estate across the IJ river, smart housing blocks and office towers are springing up at the Overhoeks development.

On the southern ringway, the hi-tech business district of Zuidas ('south axis') is positioning itself as a rival to London's Canary Wharf. One of the more intriguing sights out here is the [ING House \(Map p58-9; Amstelveenseweg 500\)](#), a shoe-shaped, glass-clad complex on stilts – truly a bank with a sole.

Striking architecture of the NEMO science museum (p69)



The Van Gogh Museum (p109)



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## NEIGHBOURHOODS

### top picks

- **Van Gogh Museum** (p109)  
Admire the vivid swirls of a tortured genius.
- **Oude Kerk** (p75) and **Nieuwe Kerk** (p66)  
Pick out centuries of glorious detail.
- **Southern Canal Belt** (p98)  
Bask in the magnificent canal architecture.
- **Museum Het Rembrandthuis** (p78)  
Visit the inner sanctum of a master painter.
- **Red Light District** (p74)  
Loosen your tie in the controlled sleaze.
- **Vondelpark** (p115)  
Kick off your shoes in Amsterdam's answer to Central Park.
- **Anne Frank Huis** (p93)  
Relive the horrors from a young girl's diary.
- **Amsterdams Historisch Museum** (p68)  
Lift the veil on a storied past.
- **Jordaan district** (p84)  
Explore the incredibly cosy lanes and cafés.
- **Artis Zoo** (p121)  
Stroll through a rainforest or African savannah.

# NEIGHBOURHOODS

If you could pick a shape for Amsterdam, what could possibly be more fitting than a bicycle wheel? Or at least half of one, as if sliced in two by a passing tram.

The old city is bathed by rings of canals known as the Grachtengordel (Canal Belt). Think of the main train station, Centraal Station, as being the hub of the wheel, with streets running out like spokes and linking the canals together. Once you know this much, you won't get lost (often). It also helps to remember the sequence of the main canals, from the centre moving outwards: Singel, Herengracht, Keizersgracht, Prinsengracht and Singelgracht.

The oldest districts are also the most central, and we've divided them up into three areas on the City Centre map. A good place to start your exploration is the Medieval Centre, home to many top sights such as the Royal Palace, the Nieuwe Kerk and the Amsterdams Historisch Museum. The city's intellectual life happens around the Spui, a leafy main square flanked by cafés and bookshops.

The Red Light District has been catering to worldly vices for centuries. Apart from the come-hither looks and giant joints, you'll find the magnificent Oude Kerk and lesser-known assets such as a clandestine church-museum. Surprising for some, this old sailor's quarter is quite picturesque. Apart from a Gothic weigh house and a café-lined square, Nieuwmarkt holds the keys to the Rembrandthuis – the master painter's studio – as well as to intriguing old synagogues and museums in the old Jewish quarter.

Moving outward, the Western Canal Belt is filled with stately mansions and home to the Anne Frank Huis. The towering Westerkerk, with its famous carillon and pot-bellied crown, is one of Amsterdam's signature buildings. Nearby you'll find the city's most alluring shopping in the Negen Straatjes, a tightly woven web of boutiques and specialist vendors. The houses become larger and more affluent in the Southern Canal Belt, where you'll find party zones around Rembrandtplein and Leidseplein, art and antiques in the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, and charming shops and restaurants along Utrechtsestraat.

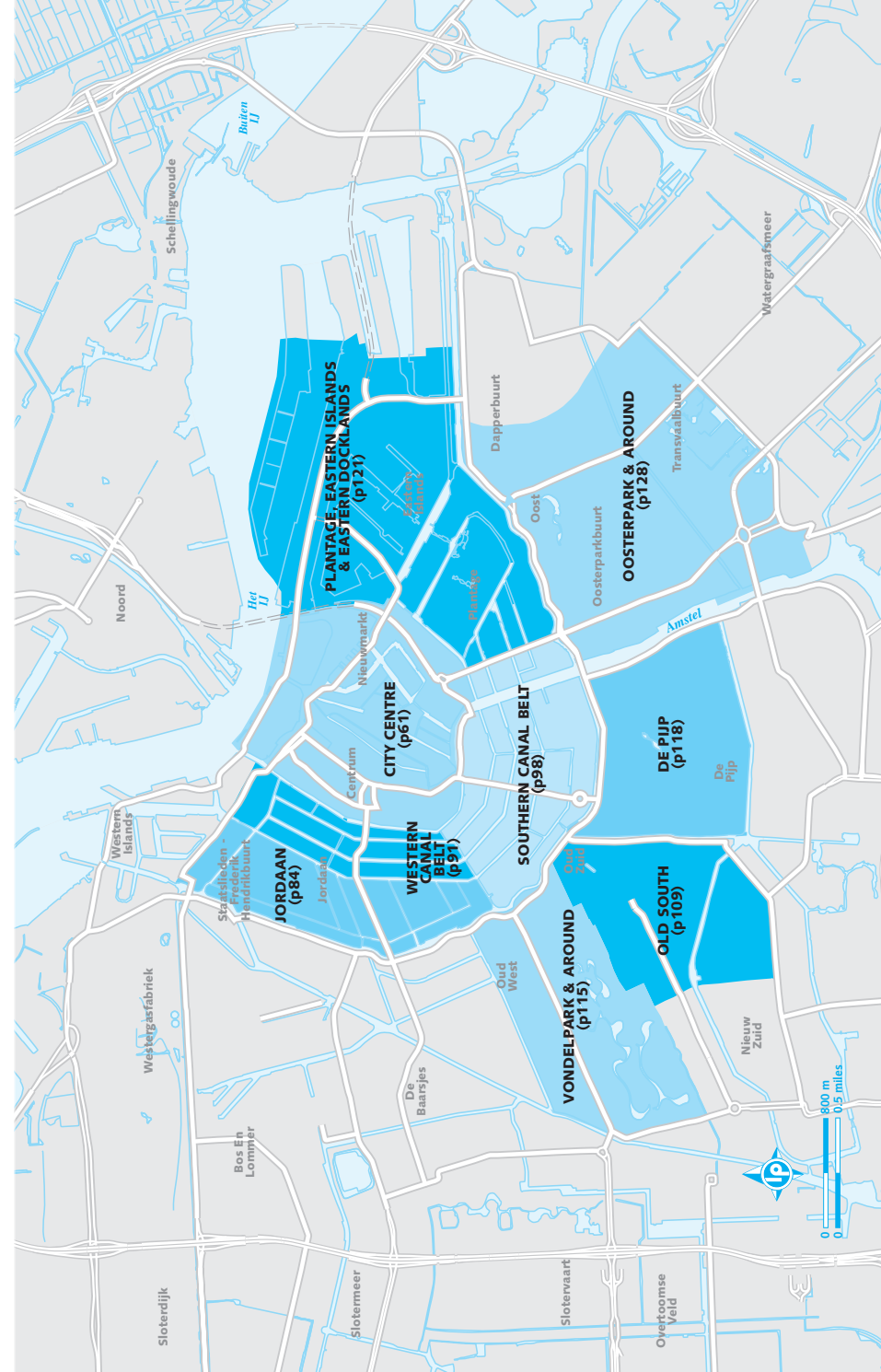
To the west of the Canal Belt, the popular Jordaan is a former workers quarter teeming with cosy pubs, cafés and galleries. Short on conventional sights, yes, but there's no better place to lose yourself for an afternoon's leisurely stroll. The offbeat Pianola Museum located here invites you to step back in musical history.

The Vondelpark is a green lung with personality. This English-style landscape park is replete with quaint features: a teahouse shaped like a flying saucer, a thatched colonial restaurant and a shell-like amphitheatre for summer plays. In fine weather it's always a hive of activity.

The renowned Van Gogh and Rijksmuseum collections, as well as the Concertgebouw music hall, are in the genteel neighbourhood Old South, a few minutes' walk south of the centre. Amsterdam's well-to-do reside here in handsome villas, and frequent the exclusive garment shops in PC Hoofstraat. Next door, ethnic meets trendy in De Pijp, an up-and-coming neighbourhood with the famed Albert Cuyp Market and eateries serving cuisine from the former colonies.

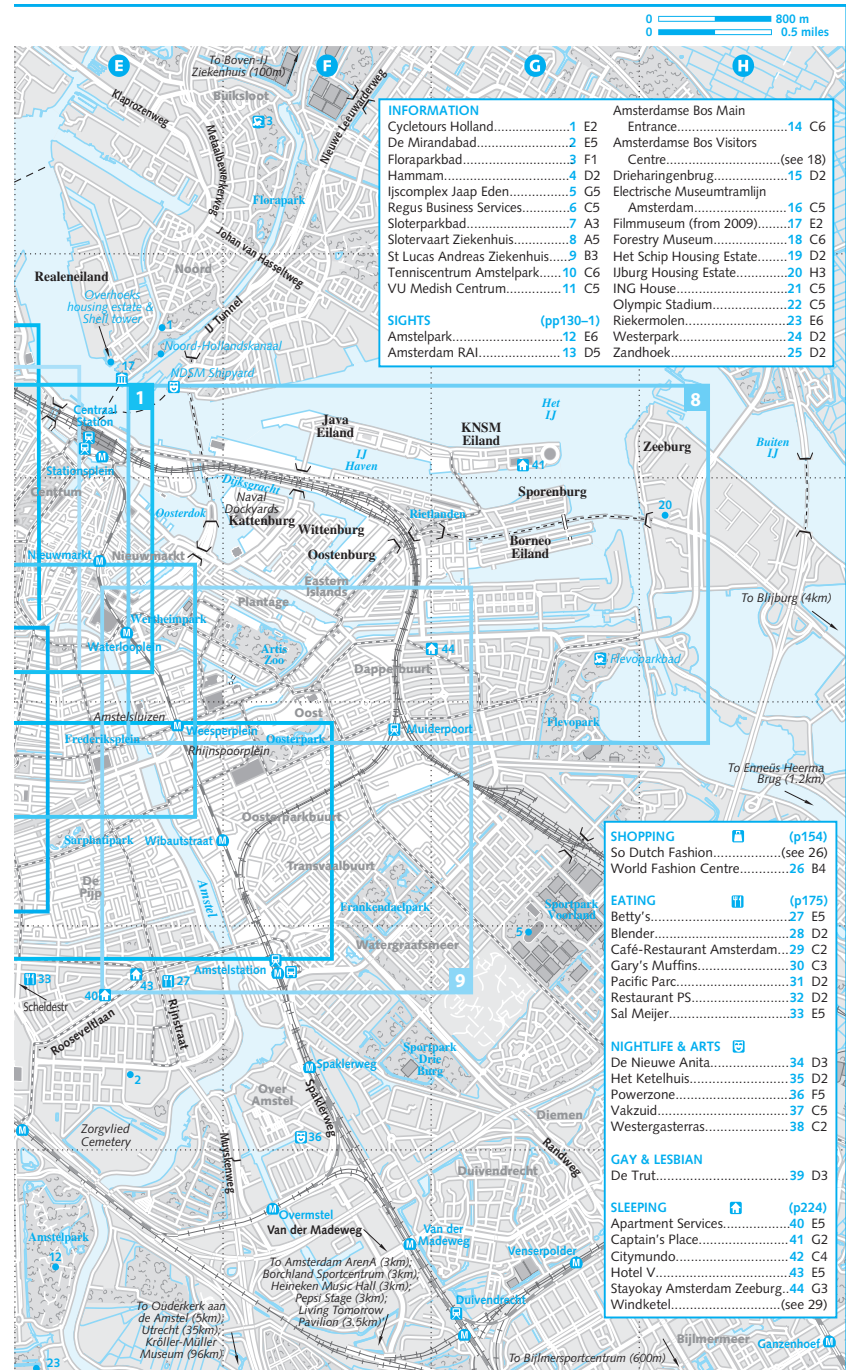
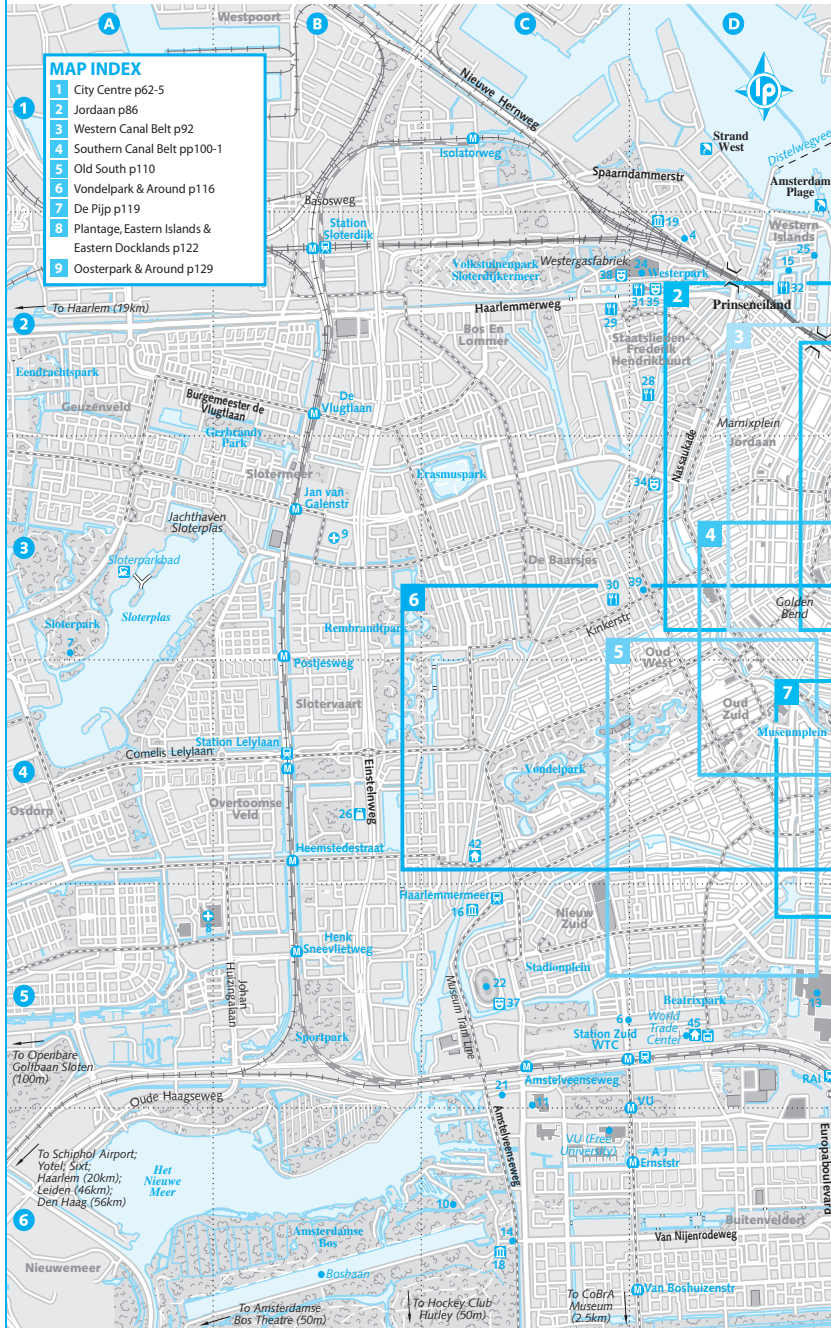
Immediately to the east of the Southern Canal Belt lies the Plantage, the former gardens that now hosts the lively Artis Zoo, the country's oldest animal park. The district segues into the old warehouse hubs of the Eastern Islands and Eastern Docklands, artificial islands that have been graced with attractive modern buildings such as the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, a state-of-the-art performance hall. The highlight of the rambling Oosterpark district is the excellent Tropenmuseum.

**'You'll find the city's most alluring shopping in the Negen Straatjes, a tightly woven web of boutiques and specialist vendors.'**





# GREATER AMSTERDAM





## ITINERARY BUILDER

The table below allows you to plan a day's worth of activities in any area of the city. Simply select which area you wish to explore, and then mix and match from the corresponding listings to build your day. The first item in each cell represents a well-known highlight of the area, while the other items are more off-the-beaten-track gems.

AREA	ACTIVITIES	Sightseeing	Eating	Drinking & Nightlife
Medieval Centre		<b>Amsterdams Historisch Museum</b> (p68) Nieuwe Kerk (p66) Begijnhof (p68)	<b>Supper Club</b> (p158) Le Petit Latin (p159) Lucius (p158)	<b>Café Dante</b> (p182) Hoppe (p181) Bitterzoet (p196)
Red Light District & Nieuwmarkt		<b>Museum Amstelkring</b> (p75) Oude Kerk (p75) Museum het Rembrandthuis (p78)	<b>Blauw aan de Wal</b> (p160) New King (p160) Hemelse Modder (p161)	<b>Winston Kingdom</b> (p197) Cotton Club (p198) Café de Jaren (p185)
Jordaan		<b>Pianola Museum</b> (p85) Hofjes (courtyards; p85) Johnny Jordaanplein (p84)	<b>Bordewijk</b> (p161) Cinema Paradiso (p162) De Blaffende Vis (p163)	<b>Café 't Smalle</b> (p186) De Prins (p186) Café 't Monumentje (p186)
Western Canal Belt		<b>Anne Frank Huis</b> (p93) Westerkerk (p93) Theater Instituut Nederland (p93)	<b>Christophe</b> (p163) Buffet van Odette (p164) Envy (p164)	<b>Café Het Molenpad</b> (p187) De II Prinsen (p187) Café de Vergulde Gaper (p189)
Southern Canal Belt		<b>FOAM</b> (p99) Bloemenmarkt (p99) Museum Van Loon (p99)	<b>Tujuh Maret</b> (p167) Pata Negra (p168) La Rive (p166)	<b>Oosterling</b> (p189) Sugar Factory (p197) Paradiso (p199)
Old South, Vondelpark & De Pijp		<b>Rijksmuseum</b> (p111) Heineken Experience (p118) Van Gogh Museum (p109)	<b>De Burgermeester</b> (p173) Bazar Amsterdam (p172) Balti House (p172)	<b>Bar Ça</b> (p192) Pilsvogel (p192) Wildschut (p191)
Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands		<b>Artis Zoo</b> (p121) Verzetsmuseum (p123) Hortus Botanicus (p123)	<b>A Tavola</b> (p173) Odessa (p174) Plancius (p173)	<b>KHL</b> (p193) Café Koojse (p193) Brouwerij 't IJ (p192)
Other Districts		<b>Tropenmuseum</b> (p128) CoBRa Museum (p131) Amsterdamse Bos (p131)	<b>Pacific Parc</b> (p175) De Kas (p174) Restaurant PS (p175)	<b>Amstel Haven</b> (p194) Westergasterras (p197) To Night (p197)

## CITY CENTRE

Drinking & Smoking p180; Eating p158; Shopping p137; Sleeping p212

The city's golden egg hatched at a weir built across the Amstel river. Two streets called Damrak (p70) and Rokin (p69), which run north and south from the Dam, formed the Amstel's final stretch. East of the Damrak-Rokin axis is the 'Old Side' of medieval Amsterdam, while the west bank is the Nieuwe Zijde (New Side). One of many oddities you'll discover in this quirky city is that the 'New Side' is actually older than the 'Old Side'; their names come from the parishes around the Oude Kerk (Old Church, p75) and the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church, p66).

Although it's hard to imagine now, the Damrak was Amsterdam's first harbour, a long, busy tongue of water where ships unloaded spices, salt and coffee. Soon the ships grew too large for the Dam and tied up to palisades along the outer harbour, and then unloaded onto lighters to be ferried up the canals. Today, Damrak is an agonising stretch of gaudy souvenir and sex shops, exchange bureaux, cheap restaurants and dumpy hotels, although the city is constantly fighting to make it more respectable.

The bottom of the Damrak ends in the Dam (p69), the hallowed spot where the original dam was built. (Put 'Amstel' and 'Dam' together, and you've got the city's name.) South of the Dam, the Damrak sheds its gutter qualities and becomes Rokin. Once a large canal, most of the Rokin was filled in during the 19th century, and quickly distanced itself from the seedy Damrak. It has a number of fine office buildings (including the modern Options Exchange at No 61), prestigious shops (such as the wood-panelled tobacconist Hajenius at No 92) and art dealers.

Amsterdam's notorious Red Light District has been lubricating libidos since the 14th century. Ships would drift into the Oudezijds Achterburgwal canal to unload their wares, and as soon as the ropes were set, the sailors would jump off and head for the next distillery or bordello. Many would squander their earnings in a few weeks and slink back to the ship, cursing their bad luck.

Quicker than you can say *la plus ça change*, you'll see that liquor and sex are still the main squeezes. Only the presentation has got more sophisticated; what seems rough and seedy is actually slick and regulated. It's a big money-spinner so the city does its best to keep everybody happy. If you'd like to get a taste of the Red Light District without going all the way, take a quick walk down Oude Nieuwstraat.

A main artery of the Red Light District is Zeedijk (p76), the original sea dyke that guided sailors from the mouth of the Amstel to Nieuwmarkt Square. The street was the first port of call after long sea voyages, and has a colourful history stocked with volumes of wine, women and song. Its great variety of entertainment – including brown cafés, gay bars, late-night hang-outs and music clubs – means it's buzzing pretty much around the clock. The Zeedijk used to be a virtual no-go area, but today it's quite safe thanks to the surveillance cameras and frequent police patrols.

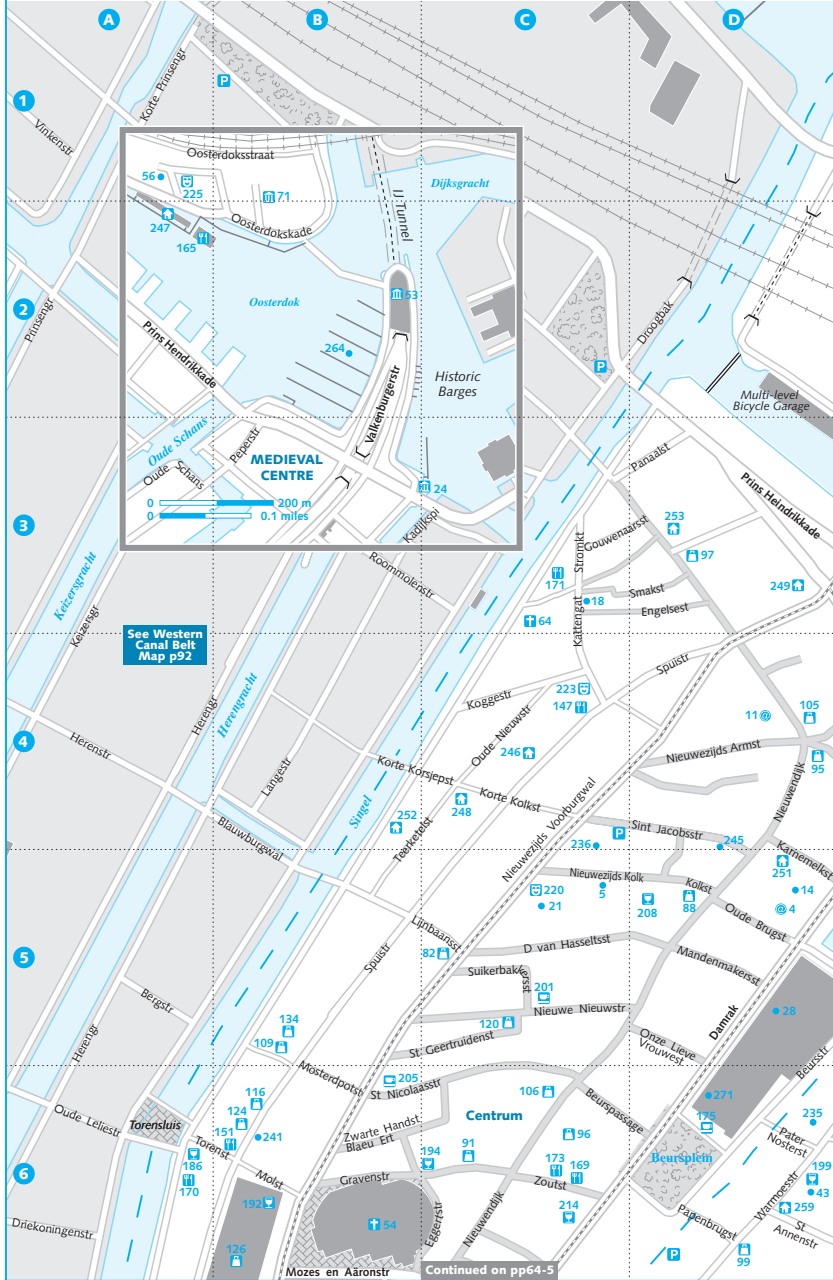
Nieuwmarkt is a district as historic as anything you'll find in Amsterdam – Rembrandt painted canalscapes here, and Jewish merchants generated a fair share of the city's wealth – yet many locals associate it with recent conflict. In the 1970s Nieuwmarkt's reputation had bottomed out. It had become the centre of Amsterdam's heroin trade, and drug dealers and mobsters controlled the streets. Things got so bad that the mayor basically threw in the towel, recommending people visit a miniature model of Nieuwmarkt (at the Madurodam amusement park near Den Haag) rather than risking personal harm.

As if that wasn't enough, a bitter conflict emerged over plans for a new metro line that would require the destruction of many homes. (Just for the record, the city won.) For a reminder, check out the giant black-and-white photos in the metro station at Nieuwmarkt.

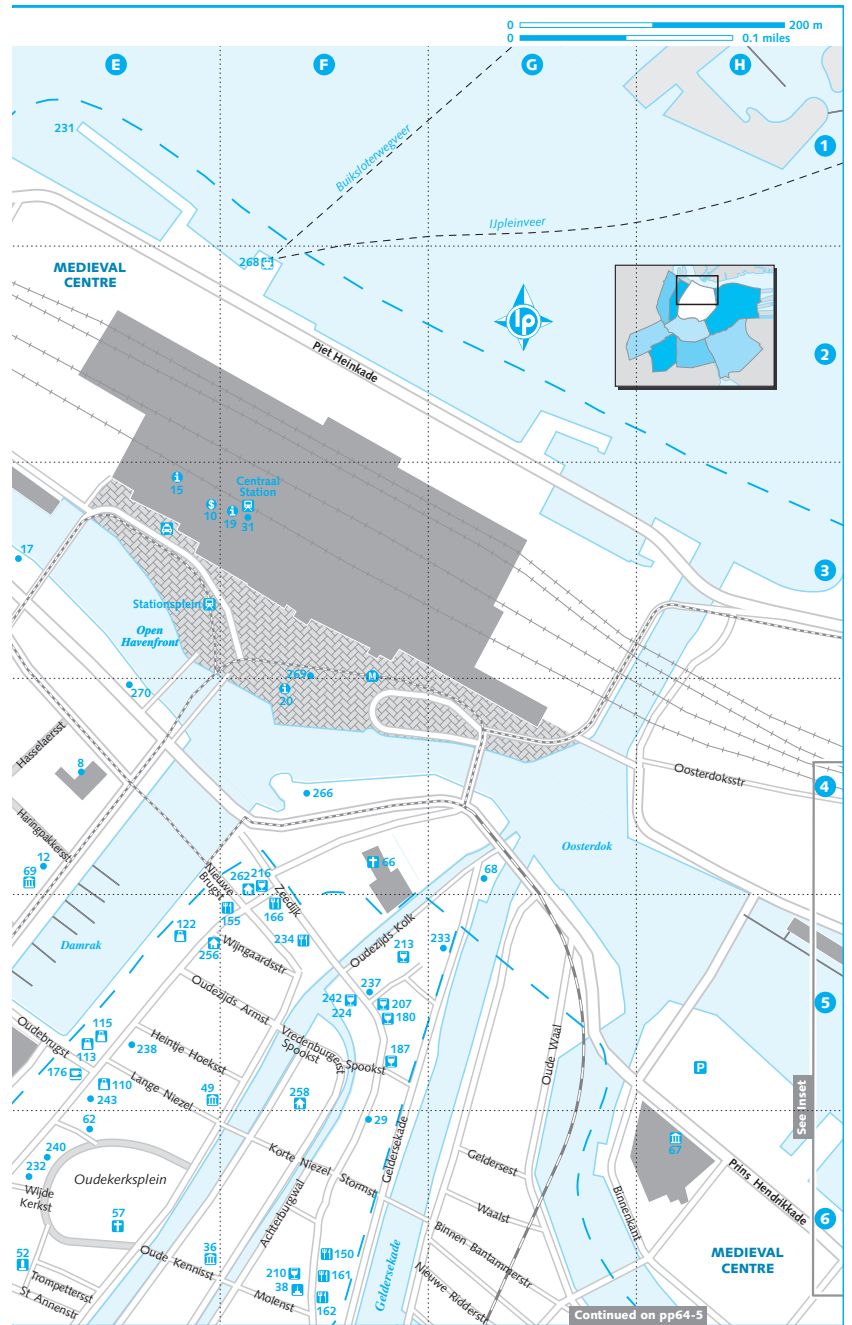
The turning point came when a policeman was murdered by a drug addict – not the best advertisement for a city just getting its head around the tourist trade. The police stepped in and the Nieuwmarkt was saved, not just in miniature. You might still encounter junkies, particularly along Geldersekaade to the north of the square, but nowadays they're few and far between.

The area southeast of here, the 'new' canals (Nieuwe Herengracht, Nieuwe Keizersgracht and Nieuwe Prinsengracht), intersected by the Weesperstraat traffic artery, was where the canal-belt project petered out around 1700. The canals on this far side of the Amstel were less in demand among the city's wealthy residents, and went to charities or were settled by well-off Jews from the Jewish quarter.

# CITY CENTRE

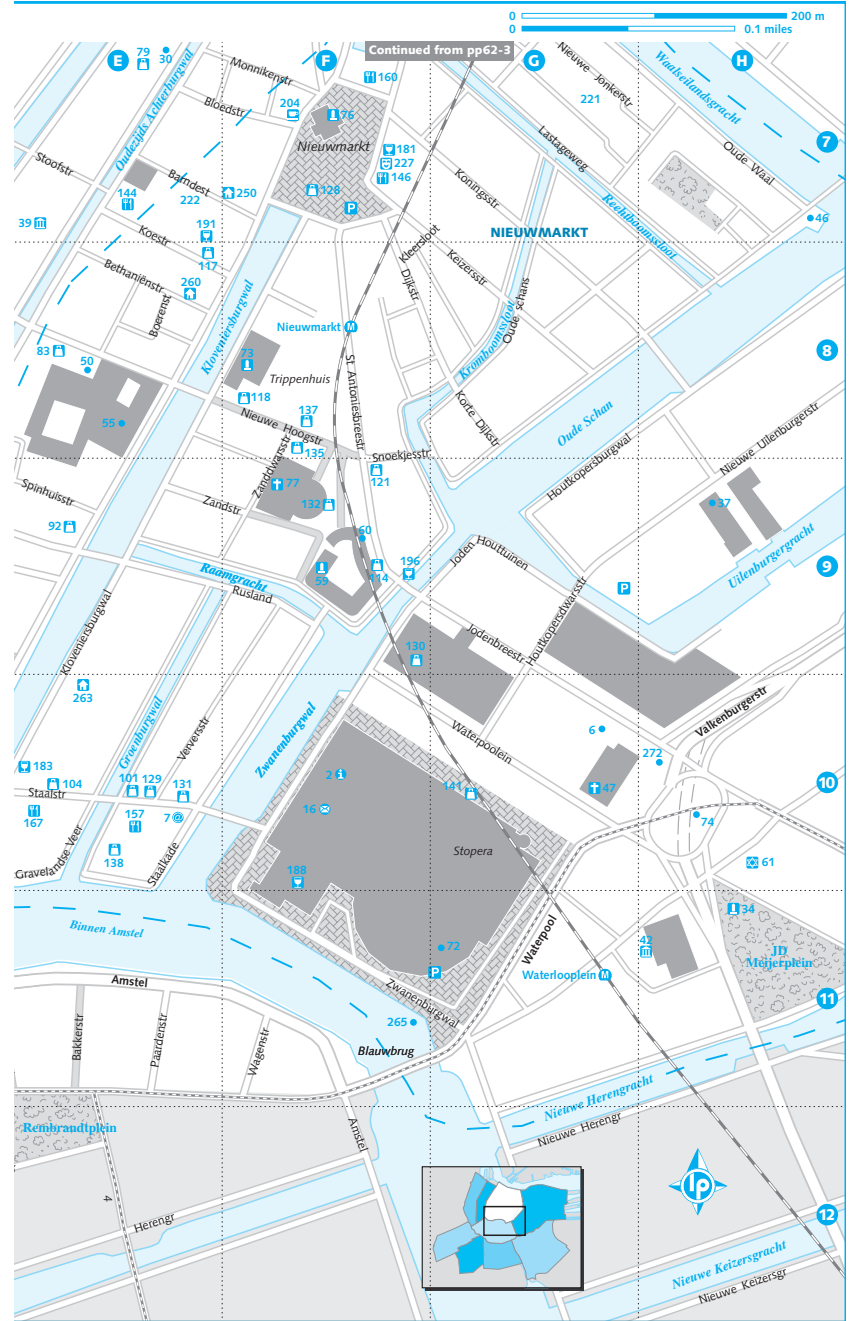
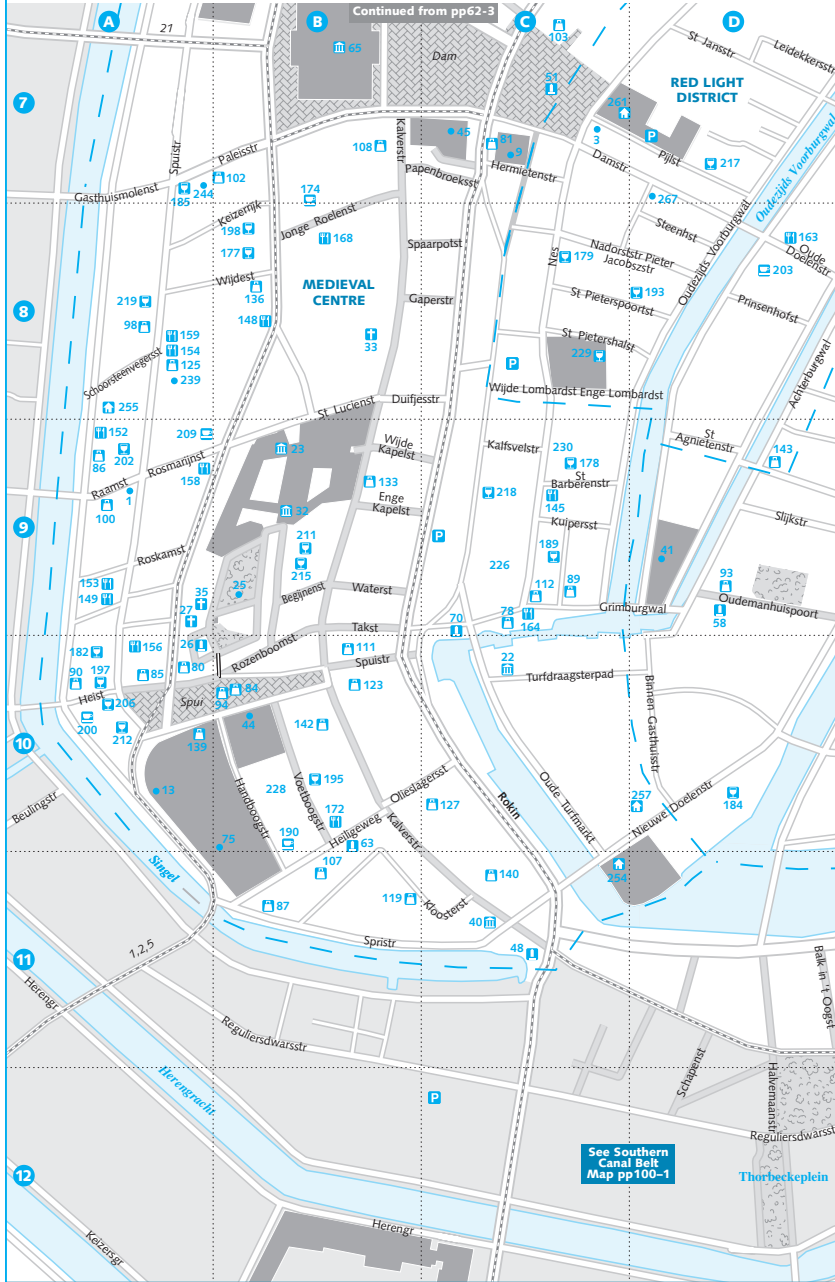


Continued on pp64-5



Continued on pp64-5

# CITY CENTRE (continued)





## CITY CENTRE

<b>INFORMATION</b>			
British Language Training Centre.....	1	A9	Mozen en Aäronkerk.....47 G10
City Hall Information Centre.....	2	F10	Munttoren.....48 C11
Dam Apotheek.....	3	C7	Museum Amstelkring.....49 E5
easyInternetcafé.....	4	D5	Museum Het Rembrandthuis.....50 E8
Fitness First.....	5	C5	Nationaal Monument.....51 C7
Garden Gym.....	6	G10	Nelle statue & golden torso.....52 E6
goPengo.....	7	E10	NEMO.....53 B2
GWK Travelx.....	8	E4	Nieuwe Kerk.....54 B6
GWK Travelx.....	9	C7	Oostindisch Huis.....55 E8
GWK Travelx.....	10	F3	Openbare Bibliotheek.....56 A1
Internet City.....	11	D4	Amsterdam.....56 A1
Keytours.....	12	E4	Oude Kerk.....57 E6
Kilroy Travels.....	13	A10	Oudemanhuispoort.....58 D9
Lindbergh Tours.....	14	D5	Pentagon Housing Estate.....59 F9
NS International Office.....	15	E3	Pintohuis.....60 F9
Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam.....	(see 56)		Portuguese-Israelite Synagogue.....61 H10
Post Office.....	16	F10	Prostitution Information Centre.....62 E6
Rederij Lovers Boat Terminal.....	17	E3	Rasphuis Gate.....63 B10
Splash Fitnessclub.....	18	C3	Ronde Lutherse Kerk.....64 C3
VVV.....	19	F3	Royal Palace.....65 B7
VVV.....	20	F4	St Nicolaaskerk.....66 F4
Yellow Bike.....	21	C5	Scheepvaarthuis.....67 H6
			Schreierstoren.....68 G4
			Sexmuseum Amsterdam.....69 E4
<b>SIGHTS</b> (pp61-83)			Statue of Queen Wilhelmina.....70 C9
Allard Pierson Museum.....	22	C10	Stedelijk Museum CS.....71 B1
Amsterdams Historisch Museum.....	23	B9	Stopera.....72 G11
Arcam.....	24	C3	Trippenhuis.....73 F8
Begijnhof.....	25	B9	TunFun.....74 H10
Begijnhof 34.....	26	A10	University Library.....75 B10
Begijnhof Kapel.....	27	A9	Waag.....76 F7
Beurs van Berlage.....	28	D5	Zuiderkerk.....77 F9
Café Het Mandje.....	29	F6	
Casa Rosso.....	30	E7	<b>SHOPPING</b> (pp137-42)
Centraal Station.....	31	F3	3-D Hologrammen.....78 C9
Civic Guard Gallery.....	32	B9	Absolute Danny.....79 E7
De Papagaai.....	33	B8	American Book Center.....80 A10
Dockworker statue.....	34	H11	Amsterdam Diamond Center.....81 C7
Engelse Kerk.....	35	A9	Amsterdam Photography.....82 C5
Erotic Museum.....	36	E6	Antiquariaat Kok.....83 E8
Gassan Diamonds.....	37	H9	Antiques Market.....(see 128)
Guan Yin Shrine.....	38	D8	Art Market.....84 B10
Hash & Marijuana Museum.....	39	E7	Athenaeum Bookshop & Newsagency.....85 A10
Het Oranje Voetbal Museum.....	40	C11	Au Bout du Monde.....86 A9
Huis aan de Drie Grachten.....	41	D9	Australian Homemade.....87 B11
Joods Historisch Museum.....	42	H11	Bazar.....88 D5
La Vie en Rose.....	43	D6	Beaufort.....89 C9
Maagdenhuis.....	44	B10	Blond.....90 A10
Madame Tussauds Amsterdam.....	45	C7	Blue Note.....91 C6
Magna Plaza.....	(see 126)		Boerenmarkt.....(see 128)
Montelbaanstoren.....	46	H7	Book Exchange.....92 E9
			Book Market.....93 D9
			Book Market.....94 B10
			Boudisque.....95 D4
			C&A.....96 C6
			Chills & Thrills.....97 D3
			Concrete.....98 A8
			Condomerie Het Gulden Vlies.....99 D6
			Cracked Kettle.....100 A9
			De Beestenwinkel.....101 E10
			De Bierkoning.....102 B7
			De Bijenkorf.....103 C7
			Droog Design.....104 E10
			Etos.....105 D4
			Etos.....106 C6
			Fair Trade Shop.....107 B11
			Fame Music.....108 B7
			Female & Partners.....109 B5
			Gall & Gall.....(see 150)
			Geels & Co.....110 E5
			H&M.....111 B10
			Hans Appenzeller.....112 C9
			Hema.....113 E5
			Henxs.....114 F9
			Herman Brood Galerie.....(see 182)
			Himalaya.....115 E5
			Innerspace.....116 B6
			Jacob Hooy & Co.....117 E8
			Joe's Vliegerwinkel.....118 F8
			Kalvertoren Shopping Centre.....119 B11
			Killa Cutz.....120 C5
			Knuffels.....121 F9
			Kokopelli.....122 E5
			Laundry Industry.....123 B10
			Le Cellier.....124 B6
			Magic Mushroom Gallery.....125 A8
			Magna Plaza.....126 B6
			Maison de Bonneterie.....127 C10
			Nieuwmarkt.....128 F7
			Nijhof & Lee.....129 E10
			Pinokkio.....(see 126)
			Po Chai Tong.....130 F10
			Puccini Bomboni.....131 E10
			Riele.....132 F9
			Rituals.....133 B9
			Rush Hour Records.....134 B5
			Seventyfive.....135 F8
			Stamp & Coin Market.....136 B8
			't Klompenhuisje.....137 F8
			Typo Gallery.....138 E10
			University Shop.....139 A10
			Vroom & Dreesmann.....140 C11
			Waterlooplein Flea Market.....141 G10
			Waterstones.....142 B10
			Wonderwood.....143 D9

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

The charming thing about Amsterdam's medieval heart is its remarkable state of preservation. The city steadily grew in layers around the leaf-shaped harbour, and although there have been countless changes – various canals have been filled in and modern streets like Kalverstraat scarcely betray their gritty roots – the overall layout and dimensions are little changed since the 17th century. The

happy result? The district has the air of a living museum, and certain vistas look cut out of a Golden Age landscape.

### NIEUWE KERK Map pp62-5

**New Church;** ☎ 638 69 09; [www.nieuwekerk.nl](http://www.nieuwekerk.nl); **the Dam; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-15yr €10/free/7.50;** ☎ 10am-6pm Fri-Wed, to 10pm Thu On the Dam, this 14th-century basilica is the historic stage of Dutch coronations; the stained glass over the main entrance

<b>EATING</b> (pp158-61)			
Blauw Aan De Wal.....	144	E7	Café-Restaurant Kapitein Zeppo's.....189 C9
Brasserie Harkema.....	145	C9	Dampkring.....190 B10
Broedje van Kootje.....	(see 212)		De Bekeerde Suster.....191 E7
Café Bern.....	146	F7	De Blauwe Parade.....192 B6
De Keuken van 1870.....	147	C4	De Brakke Gronde.....(see 229)
Dolores.....	148	B8	De Buurvrouw.....193 D8
d'Vijff Vlieghen.....	149	A9	De Drie Fleschjes.....194 C6
Eat Mode.....	150	F6	De Schutter.....195 B10
Green Planet.....	151	B6	De Sluyswacht.....196 F9
Grekas.....	152	A9	De Zwart.....197 A10
Haesje Claes.....	153	A9	Diep.....198 B8
Hemelse Modder.....	154	A8	Durty Nelly's.....199 D6
Kam Yin.....	155	F5	Dutch Flowers.....200 A10
Kantijl to Go.....	156	A10	El Guapo.....201 C5
Krua Thai.....	157	E10	Gollem.....202 A9
Le Petit Latin.....	158	A9	Greenhouse.....203 D8
Lucius.....	159	A8	Hill Street Blues.....204 F7
Nam Kee.....	160	F7	Homegrown Fantasy.....205 B6
Nam Kee.....	161	F6	Hoppe.....206 A10
New King.....	162	F6	In 't Aepjen.....207 F5
Oriental City.....	163	D8	In de Wildeman.....208 D5
Pannenkoekenhuis			Kandinsky.....209 A9
Upstairs.....	164	C9	Lime.....210 F6
Sea Palace.....	165	B2	Lokaal 't Loosje.....211 B9
Skek.....	166	F5	Luxembourg.....212 A10
Sterk Staaltje.....	167	E10	Molly Malone's.....213 F5
Supper Club.....	168	B8	Oporto.....214 C6
Van den Berg's Broodjesbar.....	169	C6	Pilsener Club.....215 B9
Villa Zeezicht.....	170	A6	Proeflokaal De Ooievaar.....216 F4
Village Bagels.....	171	C3	Proeflokaal Wijnand Fockinck.....217 D7
Vlaams Friteshuis.....	172	B10	Tara.....218 C9
Vlondamer Vishandel.....	173	C6	Vrankrijk.....219 A8
			Waag Café.....(see 76)
<b>DRINKING &amp; SMOKING</b> (pp180-5)			
Abraxas.....	174	B7	<b>NIGHTLIFE &amp; ARTS</b> (p220)
B van B Café.....	175	D6	Akhnaton.....220 C5
Baba.....	176	E5	Amsterdams Marionetten Theater.....221 G7
Bar Bep.....	177	B8	Bethaniënklooster.....222 E7
Blincker.....	178	C9	Beurs van Berlage.....(see 28)
Bubbles & Wines Champagne Bar.....	179	C8	Bitterzoet.....223 C4
Café Lef.....	180	F5	Casablanca.....224 F5
Café Cuba.....	181	F7	Casablanca Variété.....(see 224)
Café Dante.....	182	A10	Conservatorium van Amsterdam.....225 A1
Café de Doelen.....	183	E10	(from late 2008)
Café de Jaren.....	184	D10	Cosmic Theater.....226 C9
Café Het Schuim.....	185	A7	Cotton Club.....227 F7
Café van Zuylen.....	186	A6	Dansen bij Jansen.....228 B10
Café Zilt.....	187	F5	De Brakke Gronde.....229 C8
Café-Restaurant Dantzig.....	188	F10	Frascati.....230 C9
			Muziektheater.....(see 72)
			Supper Club Cruise Oase.....231 E1
			Winston Kingdom.....(see 259)
<b>GAY &amp; LESBIAN</b>			
Argos.....	232	E6	<b>SLEEPING</b> (pp212-14)
Black Tulip Hotel.....	233	G5	Aivengo Youth Hostel.....234 C4
Café Bardewijn.....	234	F5	Amstel Botel.....247 A2
Cockring.....	235	D6	Amsterdam Apartment.....248 C4
Cuckoo's Nest.....	236	C4	Bellevue Hotel.....249 D3
De Engel van Amsterdam.....	237	F5	Christian Youth Hostel 'The Shelter City'.....250 F7
Getto.....	238	E5	Flying Pig Downtown Hostel.....251 D5
Intermale.....	239	A8	Hotel Brian.....252 B4
Mr B.....	240	E6	Hotel Brower.....253 D3
Prik.....	241	B6	Hotel de L'Europe.....254 C11
Queen's Head.....	242	F5	Hotel Hoksbergen.....255 A8
Rob.....	243	E5	Hotel Luxer.....256 E5
Vrolijk.....	244	A7	Hotel Résidence Le Coin.....257 D10
Web.....	245	D4	Hotel the Crown.....258 F5
			Hotel Winston.....259 D6
			Misc Eat Drink Sleep.....260 E8
			NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky.....261 C7
			Old Nickel.....262 F4
			Stadsdoelen Youth Hostel.....263 E10
<b>TRANSPORT</b>			
Canal Bus Stop.....	264	B2	<b>ROYAL PALACE</b> Map pp62-5
Canal Bus Stop.....	265	F11	Koninklijk Paleis; ☎ 620 40 60; <a href="http://www.koninklijkhuis.nl">www.koninklijkhuis.nl</a> ; <b>the Dam; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-16yr &amp; senior €4.50/free/3.60, adult ticket with audio tour €6.50</b>
Canal Bus Stop.....	266	F4	Today's Koninklijk Paleis began life as a glorified <i>stadhuis</i> (town hall) of republican Amsterdam, completed in 1665. The architect, Jacob van Campen, spared no expense to display Amsterdam's wealth in a way that rivalled the grandest European buildings of
Damstraat Rent-a-Bike.....	267	D7	
Ferry Terminal.....	268	F2	
GVV Information Office.....	269	F3	
Holland International Terminal.....	270	E4	
Holland Rent-a-Bike.....	271	D6	
MacBike.....	272	H10	

recalls Queen Wilhelmina, who ascended the throne in 1898, aged 18. Exhibitions and organ concerts are held here, but it no longer functions as a church.

The interior is plain, but several key furnishings – the magnificent oak chancel, the bronze choir screen and the massive gilded organ (1645) – alone justify a visit. Naval hero Admiral Michiel de Ruijter, as well as poets Joost van den Vondel and Pieter Cornelisz Hooft are among the luminaries buried here.

Today's Koninklijk Paleis began life as a glorified *stadhuis* (town hall) of republican Amsterdam, completed in 1665. The architect, Jacob van Campen, spared no expense to display Amsterdam's wealth in a way that rivalled the grandest European buildings of



# top picks

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

- **Nieuwe Kerk** (p66) Take in a concert or an exhibition at the coronation church of Dutch royalty.
- **Royal Palace** (p67) Feel positively regal inside the lavishly decorated salons.
- **Civic Guard Gallery** (below) See the original giants of Dutch homeland security in ruff collars.
- **Begijnhof** (right) Spend a quiet interlude in this courtyard of historic almshouses and churches.
- **Amsterdams Historisch Museum** (right) Follow the twists and turns of city history over seven eventful centuries.

the day. The great *burgerzaal* (citizens hall) that occupies the heart of the building was envisioned as a schematic of the world, with Amsterdam as its centre. Look carefully and you'll see motifs representing the four elements: birds (air), fish (water), fruit (earth) and fire. On the far wall, a clock is constantly set to 11 o'clock, indicating that justice is possible even at the last hour.

Also worth noting are the balcony room, from where important announcements were made, and the council chamber, with its elaborate paintings and murals depicting themes of giving advice, including owls and a Jacob de Wit painting of Moses.

A century and a half after it was built, the building became the palace of King Louis, Napoleon Bonaparte's brother. In a classic slip-up in the new lingo, French-born Louis told his subjects here that he was the 'rabbit (*konijn*) of Holland', whereas he meant 'king' (*konink*). Napoleon dismissed him two years later.

The building later passed to the House of Orange before the national government bought it in 1935. Officially Queen Beatrix lives here and pays a symbolic rent, though she really lives in Den Haag.

At the time of writing, the Palace was closed till mid-2008 for a revamp; ring or check the website for updates.

### CIVIC GUARD GALLERY Map pp62-5

☎ 523 18 22; Kalverstraat 92; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

The enormous tableaux here are exclusively of medieval guards in group portraits, a captivating subgenre of Dutch painting.

Divisions such as *voetboog* (large cross-bow) and *kloveniers* (hackbut) protected the city and played a large part in deposing the Spanish government. Technically, every man had to serve in these guard units, although participation in the portraits was voluntary, as each member paid his own way. The size of the paintings was determined by the wall space in the guardhouses where the portraits were to be hung. Together with the Rijksmuseum's collection, this display is the largest of its kind and definitely not to be missed.

### BEGIJNHOF Map pp62-5

☎ 622 19 18; [www.begijnhofamsterdam.nl](http://www.begijnhofamsterdam.nl); admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm

This enclosed former convent dates from the early 14th century. It's a surreal oasis of peace, with tiny houses and postage-stamp gardens around a well-kept courtyard.

The Beguines were a Catholic order of unmarried or widowed women who cared for the elderly and lived a religious life without taking monastic vows. The last true Beguine died in the 1970s.

Contained within the *hof* is the charming **Begijnhof Kapel**, a 'clandestine' chapel where the Beguines were forced to worship after their Gothic church was taken away by the Calvinists. Go through the dogleg entrance to find marble columns, wooden pews, paintings and stained-glass windows commemorating the Miracle of Amsterdam.

The other church in the Begijnhof is known as the **Engelse Kerk** (English Church), built around 1392. It was eventually rented out to the local community of English and Scottish Presbyterian refugees – the Pilgrim Fathers worshipped here – and still serves as the city's Presbyterian church.

Also note the house at No 34; it dates from around 1425, making it the oldest preserved wooden house in the country.

### AMSTERDAMS HISTORISCH MUSEUM Map pp62-5

Amsterdam Historical Museum; ☎ 523 18 22; [www.ahm.nl](http://www.ahm.nl); Kalverstraat 92; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-18yr €7/free/3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

Housed in the old civic orphanage, this museum takes you through all the fascinating twists and turns in Amsterdam's convoluted history. Begin with the large-screen TV depicting an aerial view of the city's evolution,

from tiny settlement on the mouth of the Amstel, as it was filled in to create the metropolis. You'll find models of old homes, religious objects (including some relating to the Miracle of Amsterdam; see the boxed text, p73) and a detailed history of Dutch commerce. Later sections cover the world wars, the spread of bicycle use and even a re-creation of the original Café Het Mandje, a touchstone in the gay-rights movement.

Outside, be sure to visit the courtyard (note the cupboards in which the orphans stored their possessions) and view the amazing portraits in the **Civic Guard Gallery** (opposite).

### DAM Map pp62-5

The southern part of this famous square was the divine spot where Amsterdam was founded around 1270, and the rest is chequered history. But few people know that long before it hosted fun fairs, the square was split into sections called *Visserdsdam*, a fish market where the *Bijenkorf* department store now stands, and *Vijgendam*, probably named for the figs and other exotic fruits unloaded from ships. Markets and events have been held here through the ages, including executions – you can still see holes on the front of the Royal Palace where the wooden gallows were affixed. From the 19th century onward the Dam became a sort of national square, meaning that when there's a major speech or demonstration, it's held here.

### BEURS VAN BERLAGE Map pp62-5

☎ 530 41 41; Damrak 243

Named after architect HP Berlage (see p51), this landmark building from 1903 was once the leading stock and commodities exchange. The plans show Berlage's humour and an almost perverse willingness to show the guts of a building, such as the exposed steel struts and giant screws of the main hall. Trading quickly outgrew the *beurs*, however, and moved to the nearby Effectenbeurs less than two decades later.

The Beurs van Berlage is now home to the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and hosts museum exhibitions. In the **Beurs' B van B Café** (p182), stop to ponder the 1903 murals by Jan Toorop, representing past, present and future.

### ROKIN Map pp62-5

South of the Dam, this street is part of the route most visitors take from Centraal

Station into town, the name being a corruption of '*Rak-in*', or inward reach. In the early 16th century, the northern part was the site of the first Amsterdam stock exchange, which played a big part in spinning Golden Age riches. The *Rokin* is now in the grip of the underground construction of a new metro line, which has brought forth a number of archaeological finds from the Amstel's old river bed. At the intersection of *Rokin* and *Grimburgwal* stands a **statue of Queen Wilhelmina** on horseback, a reminder of the monarch's trots through Amsterdam during official processions.

### SPUI Map pp62-5

Flanked by bookshops and cafés, this broad square split by tramlines is most closely associated with the 1960s, where the 'Provos' (p70), of the political counterculture, staged some of their mischievous pranks. The statue in the middle is of a playful urchin called *Lieverdje* (Little Darling), a gift from a cigarette company. The Spui was a body of water until the 1880s, and is now the site of Sunday book and art markets (see p151).

### STEDELIJK MUSEUM CS Map pp62-5

☎ 573 29 11; [www.stedelijk.nl](http://www.stedelijk.nl); 2nd & 3rd fl, Post CS Bldg, Oosterdokskade 5; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-16yr & senior €9/free/4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm

The modern classics here are among the world's most admired, amassed with great skill by postwar curator Willem Sandberg. The permanent collection includes all the blue chips of 19th and 20th century painting – Monet, Van Gogh and Picasso among them – as well as sculptures by Rodin, abstracts by Mondriaan and Kandinsky, and much, much more.

For the time being, only temporary exhibitions are held in this former post-office tower. At the time of writing it was due to close in October 2008, but selected treasures will be exhibited at different venues including the Van Gogh Museum through to the end of 2009, when the main **Stedelijk Museum building** (p113) on Museumplein is set to reopen after a lengthy renovation.

### NEMO Map pp62-5

☎ 531 32 33; [www.e-nemo.nl](http://www.e-nemo.nl); Oosterdok 2; adult/child under 4yr/student €11.50/free/6.50;

☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, plus Mon Jul & Aug

Perched atop the entrance to the IJ-Tunnel is the wedge-shaped museum of science

## THE PROVOS & THEIR PRANKS

In the Swinging '60s the Dutch had their own brand of hippies called 'Provos'. They sought to provoke – no surprise there – and their impish antics caught the imagination of a society seeking to renew itself.

The Provos were led by Robert Jasper Grootveld, a self-appointed shaman, window-washer and antimoking activist. The great supremo had no problem with marijuana, however, as he and his stoned disciples would chant mantras against Big Tobacco and consumer society at get-togethers in Grootveld's garage, near Leidseplein. There was no shortage of bizarre hangers-on, such as Bart Huges, who drilled a 'third eye' in his forehead to expand his consciousness. Amsterdam, the city 'full of refrigerators and food mixers', was set for a showdown.

Every week during the summer of 1965, the Provos would gather on the Spui at the *Lieverdje* statue (see p69) to perform their 'street pranks'. The throngs of young, flower-bearing, guitar-wielding followers would chant their nonsensical slogans around Grootveld, who dressed as a medicine man. Surprised police responded with the baton and brutal arrests, and soon the entire country was engaged in a heated debate for and against the authorities.

The generation gap was only part of it: many older people who were uneasy about how little Dutch society had changed since WWII came out in favour of the Provos and could not understand why the authorities had so completely lost the plot.

Throughout 1965 and 1966 the Provos launched a series of 'White Plans' to protect the environment, including the famous White Bicycle Plan. The idea was to alleviate traffic congestion by dispensing free white bicycles, to be stationed around town. To kick-start the programme, the Provos donated the first two-wheeler, which was promptly confiscated by the police.

Provos were also behind the 1966 riot over the wedding of Princess Beatrix to the German diplomat Claus von Amsberg, who had served in Hitler's army. Despite the tight security, a live chicken was hurled at the royal coach and smoke bombs were ignited as the procession made its way along Raadhuisstraat.

In 1967 the Provos dissolved, saying their goal of making people sit up and think had been met. Grootveld went on to found the absurdist *Kabouterbeweging* (Garden Gnomes Movement) and continued to rail against consumerism.

and technology, the largest in the Netherlands. Italian architect Renzo Piano (whose works also include the Centre Pompidou in Paris) conceived of this design as the inverse of the tunnel below it.

It's really meant for kids, but grown-ups will probably enjoy it too. There are loads of interactive exhibits, drawing with a laser, 'anti-gravity' trick mirrors and a 'lab' where you can answer such questions as 'How black is black?' and 'How do you make cheese?' Signage is in English and Dutch.

In summer, the terraced rooftop plaza hosts **Nemo Beach** (admission €2.50, with NEMO admission free; ☎ vary). The 'beach' itself is actually a rather elaborate sandbox occupying just a small section of the roof, but further up DJs spin, and there's a bar, a convivial atmosphere and nice views.

### ARCAM Map pp62-5

Stichting Architectuur Centrum Amsterdam; ☎ 620 48 78; [www.arcam.nl](http://www.arcam.nl); Prins Hendrikkade 600; admission free; ☎ 1-5pm Tue-Sat

This showpiece building of the Amsterdam Architecture Foundation is a one-stop shop for all your architectural needs. Exhibits vary, but you are sure to find books, guide maps, suggestions for tours on foot, by bike and by public transport, and reference

materials on just about anything built in town from early history to the very latest housing development. Among the best titles are *25 Buildings You Should Have Seen* and *Eastern Docklands Map*.

### DAMRAK Map pp62-5

The Damrak is the original mouth of the Amstel river in Amsterdam – 'rak' being a reach, or straight stretch of water – and the river flowed from a lock in the **Dam** (p69) into the IJ. In the 19th century the canal was filled in, except for the canal-boats docks on the east side. The gabled houses backing onto the water are among the town's most picturesque. The west side of Damrak is like a giant stretch of flypaper, with cheap tourist hotels, fast-food restaurants and souvenir shops ready to catch visitors arriving at Centraal Station. In 2002 the city removed some of the gaudiest signs for the royal wedding of Maxima and Prince Willem-Alexander.

### CENTRAAL STATION Map pp62-5

#### Stationsplein

Built on an artificial island in 1889, the Centraal Station (Amsterdam CS, to train travellers) was designed as a neo-Renaissance 'curtain', a controversial plan that effectively cut off Amsterdam from the

IJ river. One of the architects, PJ Cuypers, also designed the **Rijksmuseum** (p111), and you can see the similarities – in the square faux-Gothic towers, the fine red brick and the abundant reliefs, for sailing, trade and industry. The garage in the right-hand wing was built to shelter the Dutch royal carriage, but it's rarely there (read: never).

As for all that construction, it's for another Amsterdam master traffic plan. By 2013 the inner harbour will be enlarged, the station square pedestrianised, and buses and trams rerouted to a new terminal in the rear.

### ST NICOLAASKERK Map pp62-5

☎ 624 87 49; Prins Hendrikkade 73; admission free; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Mon, worship services 10.30am & 1pm Sun, 12.30pm Mon-Sat In plain view from Centraal Station, the magnificent cupola and neo-Renaissance towers belong to the city's main Catholic church, the first built after Catholic worship became legal again in the 19th century. The interior is notable for its high altar, the theatrical crown of Emperor Maximilian I and depictions of the Stations of the Cross, on which tireless painter Jan Dunselman laboured for 40 years. St Nicholas is the patron saint of seafarers, so the church became an important symbol for Amsterdam.

### SEXMUSEUM AMSTERDAM Map pp62-5

☎ 622 83 76; [www.sexmuseumamsterdam.nl](http://www.sexmuseumamsterdam.nl); Damrak 18; admission €2.50, age 16yr & over; ☎ 10am-11.30pm

Even if it seems rather tame in this environment, the Sexmuseum gets loads of visitors and if you're in the right mood it's good for a giggle. You'll find replicas of pornographic Pompeian plates, erotic 14th-century Viennese bronzes, some of the world's earliest nude photographs, a music box that plays 'Edelweiss' and purports to show a couple *in flagrante delicto*, and an eerie mannequin of Marilyn Monroe re-enacting the sidewalk-grate scene from *The Seven Year Itch*. The route takes you through a 'bondage room' ('You could be shocked', a sign warns).

### OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK AMSTERDAM Map pp62-5

Amsterdam Public Library; ☎ 523 09 00; [www.oba.nl](http://www.oba.nl); Oosterdoksade 143; ☎ 10am-10pm Unveiled with great fanfare in 2007, this pleasingly symmetrical, nine-storey 'tower of knowledge' (its self-appointed nickname)

is the country's largest library and has claimed a commanding spot on Amsterdam's increasingly modern landscape. Much of the excitement is visual: as you enter, marvel at the airy lobby with its 30m-high gallery. Big, inviting couches sit before picture windows on the 7th floor, and the view from the Oosterdok over the city is magnificent. There's also free web access.

### SCHEEPVAARTHUIS Map pp62-5

#### Shipping House; Prins Hendrikkade 108

The imposing Scheepvaarthuis was built in 1916 for a consortium of shipping companies. Utilising the street layout to resemble a ship's bow, this remarkable building was the first true example of Amsterdam School style (see p51). The prow-like front is crowned by a statue of Neptune, his wife and four female figures that represent the points of the compass. The window frames, entrances and interior walls display nautical imagery such as anchors and sailing ships. The building is now refurbished as a luxury hotel. Step inside to admire the intricate wrought ironwork and stained glass of the majestic central stairwell.

### MADAME TUSSAUDS AMSTERDAM

Map pp62-5

☎ 522 10 10; [www.madametussauds.nl](http://www.madametussauds.nl); Dam 20; adult/child/senior €19.95/free/14.95; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Sep-Jun, to 9pm Jul & Aug, A delight for kids, who will be filled with wonderment when they realise there is absolutely no difference between the wax David Beckham and the real thing. The place is kind of a bellwether of who's hot in Holland, be it Tiësto (a DJ), Ali B (a rapper) or Princess Maxima. And you can decide for yourself whether Prince Willem-Alexander looks fit to rule or not.

### NATIONAAL MONUMENT Map pp62-5

#### Dam

This is the Netherlands' best-known memorial to its fallen of WWII, a 22m pylon of concrete and travertine unveiled in 1956. Fronted by two lions, its pedestal has a number of symbolic statues: four males (war), a woman with child (peace), and men with dogs (resistance). The 12 urns at the rear hold earth from war cemeteries of the 11 provinces and the Dutch East Indies. The war dead are still honoured here at a ceremony every 4 May.

## AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 1: STEVE KORVER *Simon Sellars*

Steve Korver is the editor of the super periodical *Amsterdam Weekly* and the irreverent and informative *Time Out Amsterdam*. Who could be better qualified, then, to give me the inside dirt on this wonderful city?

### What's your favourite part of Amsterdam?

It varies and stretches further afield day by day as the inner city gets more and more 'organised'. I like those funky bits that were always easy to find in De Pijp and Jordaan and along the waterfront but are now getting scrubbed cleaner than clean. But the stereotypes are still nice: the canal girdle remains one of the planet's most painfully scenic places, especially when the water glows purple just before dawn.

### Speaking of stereotypes, what's the least applicable?

The whole sex, drugs and rock'n'roll thang – it's there but mostly for the tourists.

### Has Theo van Gogh's assassination (see the boxed text, p44) changed the disposition of Amsterdam and its people as much as we've been led to believe?

It was our September 11 – it only took that one death in this tiny country to have a similar effect. But after the initial hysteria flamed by populist politicians, things have mellowed and people are doing what they've done here forever: gathered as many parties around a table to talk, talk, talk... and, hopefully, hash out solutions.

### Do you have a favourite 'Amsterdam experience'?

Shooting the shit with friends on a terrace on one of those first sunny days of spring.

### Your favourite nightspot?

I'm not telling. Everyone's got to find their own. But do try to go local rather than endlessly circling around the Red Light District's inner pit. The Melkweg and Paradiso still rule, but there are a lot of new, smaller venues like Sugar Factory, Bitterzoet and Nieuwe Anita that are pumping both live music and good ol' fashioned cosiness back into the mix. As for coffee shops, remember: you can do takeaway, kids!

### Any foodie tips?

Fish stalls, for deep-throating herring – the poor, working person's sushi. Perfect for people on the move.

### Can you tell me Amsterdam's best-kept secret?

Nope.

### What are your favourite local slang or swear words?

Too many to list: just pick a disease, any disease. It's ever evolving, here: today's curse is tomorrow's Ajax football chant.

### 'Amsterdam equals bicycles' – so says the tourist board. What's the downside?

Tourists on bikes thinking they are in Disneyland, totally oblivious to the fact that basic traffic rules and precautions are just as relevant here as in any other city. Just because it all looks so cute, it doesn't mean you can't become road pizza. The same goes for pedestrians. And it's not just stoned backpackers – visitors just forget to look both ways before crossing a street. Theories abound as to why, but I haven't figured it out yet.

### How has living in Amsterdam changed you?

It's probably slowed me down to enjoy the smaller, more social things in life – doing business over a coffee and a beer instead of over a desk.

### Describe Amsterdam Weekly for someone new to it.

We are an English-language alternative weekly but we still use plenty of Dutch – especially when it's funny. We seek to be attached to the city and not detached. Our prime directive is to provide a paper for culturally savvy Amsterdammers to help plan their wacky weekends and go deeper into the cultural workings of this very special city. Oh, and we like to kick city hall's ass on occasion, whenever they think they can change things from above and not from the ground up. We aim to be the voice of the grassroots, the subcultures that are always busy bubbling up towards the surface. We just try to catch them when they're a little less moist.

## MAGNA PLAZA *Map pp62-5*

☎ 626 91 99; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 182;

🕒 11am-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-9pm Thu, noon-7pm Sun

This shimmering orange-and-white edifice was the General Post Office, built from

1895 to 1899 by the government architect CH Peters, a pupil of Pierre Cuypers. It has since been converted into a multilevel shopping mall with chain boutiques, but the hall remains impressive: three storeys of colonnades and an airy, skylit atrium.

## RONDE LUTHERSE KERK *Map pp62-5*

Round Lutheran Church; ☎ 623 15 72; Singel 11; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & Sun

This domed church, built from 1668 to 1671, has the curious distinction of being the only round Protestant church in the country. Falling attendances forced its closure in 1936, and it now serves as a conference centre for the nearby Renaissance Hotel. Ironically, the old church on the Spui that it was designed to replace is still in use.

Next door along the east side of Singel, the house at No 7 appears to be no wider than its door – except that this is actually the rear entrance of a house of normal proportions.

## HEILIGE WEG *Map pp62-5*

Leading west from Kalverstraat, the Heiligeweg (Holy Way) was once part of a route pilgrims took to the spot where the Miracle of Amsterdam occurred (see the boxed text, below). It's now a shopping street, but slightly less frenetic than Kalverstraat. Halfway along, and directly opposite Voetboogstraat, you'll see the **Rasphuis Gate**, a correctional institute in medieval times. The pedestal bears the sculpture of a woman with two criminals chained at her side, under the Latin word *Castigatio* (punishment). Below, wolves and lions shrink before her whip.

## HET ORANJE VOETBAL MUSEUM

*Map pp62-5*

☎ 589 89 89; www.supportersclub-oranje.nl; Kalverstraat 236; adult/child €7/5; 🕒 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

Here you'll find out why, for many Dutch, football isn't a matter of life or death – it's more important than that. Spread over four hallowed floors, this museum tells the story of Orange maestros including Cruyff, Van Basten and Gullit, and the revolution that

was Total Football. A tiny cinema shows a 20-minute film with some immortal footage, and hard-core fans can listen to recordings of 100 Orange songs. The downstairs shop is stocked with souvenirs in your favourite colour.

## KALVERSTRAAT *Map pp62-5*

You're sure to end up on this crowded street at some point, so we might as well mention it. Named after the livestock markets held here in the 17th century, the Kalverstraat is now a place where shoppers lather themselves into a fever pitch over the latest sales. (The Dutch Monopoly game has Kalverstraat as its most expensive street.) An unexpected oasis in this sea of consumerism is the curious Petrus en Pauluskerk, aka **Papagai** (*Map pp62-5*; ☎ 623 18 89; Kalverstraat 58; 🕒 10am-4pm), a Catholic church from the 17th century that was a clandestine house of worship. Note the parrot over the door that gave the church its funny name. The slogan you'll see upon entering: 15 minutes for God.

## ALLARD PIERSON MUSEUM

*Map pp62-5*

☎ 525 25 56; www.allartpiersonmuseum.nl; Oude Turfmarkt 127; adult/child under 4yr/child 4-16yr & senior €5/free/2.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun

Run by the University of Amsterdam, this museum boasts one of the world's richest archaeological collections. You'll find an actual mummy, vases from ancient Greece and Mesopotamia, a very cool wagon from the royal tombs at Salamis (Cyprus), and galleries full of other items providing insight into daily life in ancient times. Each section is explained in a detailed overview via English signage, although most individual items are labelled in Dutch only.

## VOMITING THE HOST

The Miracle of Amsterdam had a rather unappetising start.

In 1345 the final sacrament was administered to a dying man, but he was unable to keep down the Host (communion wafer) and – there's no way to put this delicately – vomited it up. Here's the miracle part: when the vomit was thrown on the fire, the Host would not burn. Shortly thereafter, a chapel (demolished 1908) was built on the site across Kalverstraat from what's now the museum and it soon became a pilgrimage area; the final approach is along the street now known as Heiligeweg.

In the Amsterdams Historisch Museum is a wooden chest reported to have once contained the Host. In 1578, when Catholic property was parcelled out, the chest ended up in an orphanage, and several children are said to have been cured of illnesses by sitting on it.



## FROM OUD AMSTERDAM TO NIEUW AMSTERDAM

Among the wall plaques on the Schreierstoren, one explains that the English captain Henry Hudson set sail from here in 1609 in his ship the *Halve Maen* (Half Moon). The Dutch East India Company had enlisted him to find a northern passage to the East Indies, but instead he ended up exploring the North American river that now bears his name. On the return voyage his ship was seized in England and he was forbidden to sail again to a foreign nation.

The maverick Hudson disregarded the order. Commissioned by powerful private investors from Britain and Russia, he sailed to America in search of the elusive Northwest Passage. Though an accomplished navigator, the headstrong Hudson hardly endeared himself to his crew, who mutinied in the summer of 1611. The hapless Englishman and a handful of others were set adrift in a rowboat in what's now known as Hudson Bay, where they are presumed to have died.

In any event, Hudson's reports about the island at the mouth of the Hudson River made it back to base. The Dutch soon established a fort on an island called Manhattan that flowered into a settlement called Nieuw Amsterdam; in 1626 an agent of the recently established Dutch West India Company purchased the island from Native Americans for 60 guilders (often cited as the equivalent of US\$24!). In 1664 the West India Company's local governor, the imperious, fanatically Calvinist Pieter Stuyvesant, surrendered the town to the British, who promptly renamed it New York. Stuyvesant retired to the Lower Manhattan market garden called Bouwerij, now known as the Bowery.

**Fun fact:** Manhattan's Wall St, one of the centres of world finance, was originally the site of a fortified wall erected by the Dutch to keep out the British.

It may not be in the same league as the British Museum or the Louvre, but the manageable scale of this museum makes it far more accessible.

### UNIVERSITY LIBRARY [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 525 23 01; Singel 421-425; 🕒 8.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun

Today's library is a concrete hulk, not nearly the beautiful building you'd expect from such a historic site, but its background is fascinating. Citizens militias used to meet here: the 'hand-bow' (*handboog*) militia in No 421, and the 'foot-bow' (*voetboog*) militia in No 425, which also served as headquarters for the West India Company. Now you know where the names of the nearby streets Handboogstraat and Voetboogstraat come from. Their firing ranges at the back reached to Kalverstraat.

### SCHREIERSTOREN [Map pp62-5](#)

Prins Hendrikkade 94-95

This prominent brick tower dating from around 1480 – the oldest of its kind still standing – was once part of the city's defences. Its name comes from an old Dutch word for 'sharp', for this sharp corner that jutted out into the IJ. Tourist literature prefers to call it the 'wailing tower' (from *schreien*, to weep or wail) and claims that sailors' wives stood here and cried their lungs out when ships set off for distant lands. There's even a fake plaque dedicated to the women. The tower now houses an attractive [café](#) (☎ 428 82 91).

## RED LIGHT DISTRICT

If you're expecting an outright cesspool, think again: the atmosphere here is much more laid-back than in red-light districts elsewhere, and definitely less threatening. Crowds of sightseers, both foreign and local, mingle with pimps, drunks, weirdos and drug dealers – and it's no big deal. Salvation Army soldiers trawl for lost souls; police on patrol chat with the prostitutes. (Where else can you witness live-and-let-live quite like this?) One more thing: look up at the gorgeous gables and you'll realise this district is stunningly attractive. Its lovely architecture simply gets lost in the shuffle.

The best routes for wicked window-shopping are along Oudezijds Achterburgwal and in the alleys around the Oude Kerk, particularly to the south. You can shuffle through the dark, mediocrally claustrophobic Trompettersteeg, which ends abruptly at an interior gallery of prostitutes, cloying named La Vie en Rose ([Map pp62-5](#)).

Before you go, pause for a moment by the statue of Nelle ([Map pp62-5](#)), erected in 2007 on Oude Kerk square as a nod to 'sex-industry workers' worldwide. In the cobblestones nearby there's a bold statement, a golden torso of a naked woman held by a groping, padlocked hand. The torso mysteriously appeared one day, was removed by police and then put back as most people seemed to like it.

At Zeedijk 63, the legendary Café Het Mandje ([Map pp62-5](#)) was the city's first gay and lesbian café, founded in 1927. The owner was a leather-clad biker named Bet van Beeren, who, apart from sheltering Jews in WWII,

was notorious for cutting off men's ties for interior decoration. When Bet died, her body was laid out on the billiard table for three days' mourning.

Warmoesstraat ([p77](#)) occupies an original dyke along the Amstel, making it one of the town's oldest streets. It runs parallel to the Damrak behind the former warehouses that line the east bank of the river. Here you'll notice that the Red Light District is more than the sum of its tawdry parts. It's lot nicer than it used to be and has a rather well-kept, self-deprecating feel which of course blends nicely with commerce. The cheap hotels and restaurants, coffeeshops, gay-oriented leather joints and sex shops are like parts of a stage set.

### OUDE KERK [Map pp62-5](#)

Old Church; ☎ 625 82 84; [www.oudekerk.nl](#); Oudekerksplein 23; adult/concession €4.50/3.50; 🕒 11am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun; tower per person €5; 🕒 every 30min 1-5pm Sat & Sun The city's oldest surviving building (1306) embodies a huge moral contradiction: it's in full view of the Red Light District, with

passers-by getting chatted up a throw from the church walls. But that's not all: this Gothic-style church has one of the finest carillons in the country, the city's oldest church bell (1450) and a stunning Müller organ. Check out the lively 15th-century carvings on the choir stalls, some of which are downright rude. Many famous Amsterdammers lie buried here under worn tombstones, including Rembrandt's first wife, Saskia van Uylenburgh. A Dutch Reformed service is held at 11am Sunday (doors close at 11am sharp).

### MUSEUM AMSTELKRING [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 624 66 04; [www.museumamstelkring.nl](#); Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40; adult/child 5-18yr/student €7/1/5; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun, longer hours for special exhibits

Hidden in the depths of the Red Light District, this fascinating museum has a single exhibit – an entire church, as it turns out. [Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder](#) (Our Dear Lord in the Attic) was founded after 1578, when Calvinist rulers outlawed public worship of the other religion. You'll find the city's richest

## RED LIGHT DISTRICT FAQs

- Year prostitution was legalised in the Netherlands: 1810
- Year brothels were legalised: 2000
- Percentage of the Dutch public that claims to have 'no problems whatsoever with prostitution': 78%
- Percentage of working prostitutes born in the Netherlands: 5%
- Estimated percentage of prostitutes working illegally in the Netherlands: less than 5%
- Number of windows: approximately 380
- Number of prostitutes working each day in the windows: 1000 to 1200, comprising day, evening and night shifts
- Average rental cost per window (paid by prostitute): €40 to €100 per day, depending on location
- Typical base cost for either 'oral favours' or a 'quickie' in the Red Light District: €30
- Typical base cost for both: €50
- Typical duration of encounter with prostitute: 15 minutes
- Percentage of business from British clients: about 40%
- Most likely time to see prostitutes with Dutch patrons: Monday morning (when many businesses and most shops are closed)
- Do prostitutes pay taxes? Yes
- Are condoms required by law? No, but it's virtually impossible to find a prostitute who'll work without one
- Is there a union? Yes
- Are medical checkups required? No
- Is pimping legal? No
- Is trafficking in prostitutes legal? No
- Penalty for either of the above: maximum six years
- Are accommodations made if a patron can't perform? No
- What happens if a patron gets violent? Prostitutes' quarters are equipped with a button that, when pressed, activates a light outside. The offender had better hope that the police get there before the Hell's Angels do.
- Why red light? Because it's flattering. Especially when used in combination with black light, it makes teeth sparkle. Even as early as the 1300s, women carrying red lanterns met sailors near the port. Try it for yourself sometime.



collection of Catholic art, and a fantastic labyrinth of tiled staircases, cubbyhole quarters and items pertaining to the Miracle of Amsterdam (p73). Once upstairs, you'll see that the church itself is unexpectedly grand, with marble columns, steep gallery and a surprisingly good organ.

### ZEEDIJK Map pp62-5

The curvy lane called Zeedijk is one of Amsterdam's oldest and its most notorious. Initially a shipping district, it was a respectable place to be until the 17th century, when the richer folk moved to fancy homes along newly dug canals such as Herengracht. After that it turned to come-hither entertainment for sailors, and things went rapidly downhill. In the 1960s and '70s the Zeedijk was riddled with drug dealers and street crime, but a clean-up campaign has left the street much safer than it was, with lively cafés, bars and eateries and a very mixed crowd of visitors bumping over the storied cobblestones.

### PROSTITUTION INFORMATION CENTRE Map pp62-5

☎ 420 73 28; [www.pic-amsterdam.com](http://www.pic-amsterdam.com); Enge Kerksteeg 3; ☎ noon-7pm Tue-Sat or by appointment

Spin, curiosity and respect – things this refreshing centre has none of, plenty of, and hopes to earn. Established by a former prostitute and staffed by sex workers, the centre caters to study groups from around the world, including several police academies. It organises evening walks and private tours by a former sex worker (€12.50 per person, reservation-only), as well as offering a limited souvenir trade. For a small donation you can view a re-creation of a prostitute's working quarters, view historical photos and browse the enlightening reading material.

### GUAN YIN SHRINE Map pp62-5

Fo Guang Shan He Hua Temple; ☎ 420 23 57; [www.ibps.nl](http://www.ibps.nl); Zeedijk 106-118; admission free; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Europe's first Chinese Imperial-style Buddhist temple is dedicated to Guan Yin, the Buddhist prophet. The ornate 'mountain gate' – an intriguing concept in the narrow confines of the Zeedijk, let alone in horizontal Holland – refers to the traditional setting of Buddhist monasteries. The middle section set back from the street was designed along principles of feng shui. Make a donation,

light an incense stick and ponder the thousand eyes and hands of the Bodhisattva statue. Traditional Chinese-style recitations of the sutras (sayings of the Buddha) are held every Sunday at 10.30am and are open to the public.

### HASH & MARIJUANA MUSEUM

Map pp62-5

☎ 623 59 61; [www.hashmuseum.com](http://www.hashmuseum.com); Oudezijds Achterburgwal 148; admission €5.70; ☎ 10am-10pm

Did you know that the first recorded use of marijuana was in ancient China? Or that Queen Victoria is said to have used marijuana for menstrual cramps? Just a couple of essential facts we learned at this simple exhibit, which feels like the back annex of a devoted user. Learn the basics of pot botany, the link between cannabis and religion, and the history of Amsterdam's coffee-shops. You can watch the plants grow in a greenhouse, and slowly understand why time feels different here.

### CASA ROSSO Map pp62-5

☎ 627 89 54; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 106-108; admission with/without drinks €45/30; ☎ 8pm-2am In a quarter full of lurid logos, the pink elephant wearing a green tie doesn't quite capture the essence of this one. So we're going to tell you: live sex on stage, or, as we once heard a Casa Rosso barker put it, 'Quality sleaze and filth!' Acts can be male, female, both or lesbian (although not gay...sorry, boys!). Performers demonstrate everything from positions of the Kamasutra to pole dances, incredible tricks with lit candles, and moves readily associated with competitive figure skating. Other acts are comedic, some maybe intentionally so. You may even catch a good old-fashioned striptease.

Nearby, Casa Rosso runs two imaginative sex shops at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 46 and 76.

### EROTIC MUSEUM Map pp62-5

☎ 624 73 03; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 54; admission €5; ☎ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat Ho hum. Your usual assortment of bondage exhibits, erotic photos and cartoons. Although this museum has the advantage of location, it's less entertaining, not as well laid out, more expensive and a little seedy when compared with the [Sexmuseum Amsterdam](#) (p71) on the Damrak.

## CANAL KNOWLEDGE

In Dutch, a canal is a *gracht* ('khrakht'), and Amsterdam has an awful lot of them, more even than Venice or Hamburg. The best-known canals form the central Grachtengordel (Canal Belt); to the wandering visitor they're like lifelines, because the subtle turns in the centre can throw your inner compass out of whack. What's more, the Canal Belt reads like a history book.

The extents of the medieval city were marked by the Kloveniersburgwal – a *burgwal* was a fortified embankment, bristling with rifles of the Kloveniers guards – and Geldersekade (*kade* means 'quay', with more rifles) on the Oude Zijde. The Singel (moat) on the Nieuwe Zijde held the third major line of defence.

By the early 16th century, a city wall stood here with fortified gates at strategic points. You can still see some of the gates today, though the walls were largely torn down as the city burst its boundaries.

Expansion continued until it was clear that stop-gap measures (such as artificial islands) would not be enough. In the 17th century, decades of back-breaking labour produced the Canal Belt, a grand semicircle west and south of the Medieval Centre that was destined to become ruling-class property.

The semicircular canals formed a huge ring, cut by canals radiating from the middle like spokes on a wheel. Starting from the core, the major semicircular canals are the Singel, Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Prinsengracht. An easy mnemonic is that, apart from the singular Singel, these canals are in alphabetical order. Obvious though it may seem, it took us years to figure this out.

From west to east, the major radial canals are Brouwersgracht, Leidsegracht and Reguliersgracht, also in alphabetical order. East of the Reguliersgracht is another waterway that looks like a very broad canal; this is the river Amstel, and it ends in the IJ, the river that forms the northern border of the city centre.

The Canal Belt is enclosed by the Lijnbaansgracht and a zigzag-patterned canal originally called the Buitensingel (outer moat), now known as the Singelgracht.

An interesting quirk: many streets in modern Amsterdam also bear the name 'gracht'. That's because they were once canals as well, but they've since been filled in for reasons of sanitation or ease of transportation. Other streets have 'dwars' in their names, to indicate that they intersect (or intersected) with a canal, so Leidsedwardsstraat meets up with the Leidsegracht.

### WARMOESSTRAAT Map pp62-5

Amsterdam's earliest canals grew out from the IJ river like the roots of a tree, and Warmoesstraat was one of the first streets to follow. Like Zeedijk (opposite), by the 1980s the Warmoesstraat was caught in a downward spiral of drugs and petty crime but has got its act together, thanks to frequent policing (note the CCTVs). Some people think things have gone too far: the leather bars, coffee-shops and fetish shops here now have a squeaky-clean 'safe sex' look to them, and any sign that blocks a historic gable stands to be removed.

### OUDEMANHUISPOORT Map pp62-5

Btwn Oudezijds Achterburgwal & Kloveniersburgwal On the corner of Oudezijds Achterburgwal stands a distinctive gateway with spectacles over the pedestal. This indicated its role as an almshouse for the elderly, built here in 1601 from the proceeds of a public lottery. It's now the seat of the University of Amsterdam and closed to the public, although you can wander the courtyard. Note the bust of the learned Roman goddess Minerva over the courtyard entrance.

A secondhand [book market](#) has operated in the passage since the mid-1700s (see p151).

### NES Map pp62-5

Beyond the glare of the Red Light District runs the dark, narrow lane called Nes, home to theatres for over 150 years. In 1614, Amsterdam's first bank opened in a pawnshop here, at No 57. One of the more sizzling performance stages in town is [Frascati](#) (p202).

## NIEUWMARKT

In the 17th century, ships would sail from the IJ down to Nieuwmarkt (New Market) to take on board new anchors and unload produce. Today this square east of the Red Light District is a bright, relaxed place ringed with cafés, shops and restaurants. It is also a hub of the city's amazing New Year celebrations.

Although Nieuwmarkt is very much an open space – arguably the grandest in town after the Dam – nobody adds the word *plein* (square) to the name. It's a little confusing because the whole neighbourhood to the east and southeast is also known as Nieuwmarkt.

# top picks

## NIUWMARKT

- **Museum Het Rembrandthuis** (right) View an unparalleled collection of sketches by the master painter in his personal studio.
- **Joods Historisch Museum** (opposite) Follow the heartening success, and the haunting downfall, of Amsterdam's Jewish community.
- **TunFun** (p80) Give the little ones a romp in this centre of childhood fantasy.
- **De Sluyswacht** (p184) Enjoy a coffee or a *biertje* as the canal boats drift lazily by.
- **Portuguese-Israelite Synagogue** (opposite) Breathtaking temple of prayer for the Sephardic community.

The centre of attention is the grand fairytale Waag (Weigh House, right), that was once a defensive post in the wall surrounding the city. The square is lined with cafés, bars and restaurants. To the south, at the end of St Antoniebreestraat, stands the renowned Rembrandthuis (right), with an impressive collection of the master's sketches and paintings.

The area around the Waterlooplein flea market (p80) is closely associated with the Jewish community. Until WWII the main street, Jodenbreestraat, was where many Jewish shops were located, often stacked practically upon one other. Songs echoed in diamond workshops here and in the nearby Uilenburgstraat. Jews here enjoyed more freedom than elsewhere in Europe and turned Amsterdam into a centre not only for precious gems but also tobacco, printing and clothing. Few of the open-air markets they brought to town still survive (see p151).

It is here that you'll find several important sites of Jewish interest, including synagogues, current and former, as well as the Jewish Historical Museum. The controversial Stopera, the combined city hall and opera, remains a talking point among critics, as does the St Antoniesbreestraat, an aesthetically challenged stretch of housing.

The busy roundabout east of the Mozes en Aäronkerk (p82) is Mr Visserplein. LE Visser was a Jewish president of the Supreme Court ('Mr' stands for *meester*, which means 'master', the Dutch lawyer's title) who was dismissed by the Nazis. He refused to wear the Star of David and berated the Jewish Council for helping the

occupiers carry out their anti-Jewish policies. He died before the Germans could take their revenge on him.

Nearby, south of the Portuguese synagogue, is the triangular Jonas Daniël (JD) Meijerplein, named after the country's first Jewish lawyer (whose actual name was Joune Rintel). This man did much to ensure the full emancipation of the Jews in the Napoleonic period. On the square, Mari Andriessen's Dockworker statue (1952; Map pp62-5) commemorates the general strike that began among dockworkers on 25 February 1941 to protest against the treatment of Jews. The first deportation roundup had occurred here a few days earlier. The anniversary of the strike is still an occasion for wreathe-laying, but has become a low-key affair with the demise of the Communist Party.

## WAAG Map pp62-5

☎ 422 77 72; Nieuwmarkt 4; admission free; ☎ 10am-1am

The very grand, multiturreted Waag (Weigh House) dates from 1488, when it was part of the city's fortifications. It looked more like a castle in those days, fronted by a moatlike canal and built into the old city walls. From the 17th century onward it was the main weigh house.

The surgeons guild, which occupied the upper floor, commissioned Rembrandt's famous *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp* (displayed in the Mauritshuis museum in Den Haag). The masons guild was based in the tower facing the Zeedijk; note the super-fine brickwork.

Public executions took place at the Waag, but more recently it served as a fire station and a vault for the city's archives. A bar-restaurant occupies it today, lit by medieval candle-wheels to great effect. The square is a venue for weekly markets and other events (see p151).

## MUSEUM HET REMBRANDTHUIS

Map pp62-5

☎ 520 04 00; www.rembrandthuis.nl; Jodenbree-straat 4-6; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-15yr/student €8/free/1.50/7; ☎ 10am-5pm

Rembrandt van Rijn lived and worked in this beautifully restored house dating from 1606. He bought the house for a fortune in 1639, made possible by his wealthy wife, Saskia van Uylenburgh. (Later, chronic debt would force the master painter to move to cheaper digs in the Jordaan.) The years spent in this

house were at the high point of his career, when he was regarded as a star and ran the largest painting studio in Holland.

The museum is worth visiting for its near-complete collection of Rembrandt's etchings (250 of the 280 he is known to have made), although they are not all on display at once; expect to see between 20 and 100 etchings at any one time, depending on the exhibit. Demonstrations of etching techniques take place several times daily. Note that the crowds are lightest just after opening time.

Thanks to an itemised list drawn up by a debt collector, as well as the original drawings and paintings, the interior looks much as it did when Rembrandt lived there. The collection of objects alone is mind-boggling: seashells, weaponry, musical instruments, a Roman bust and military helmets from as far away as Japan. No wonder he went bankrupt!

## JOODS HISTORISCH MUSEUM

Map pp62-5

Jewish Historical Museum; ☎ 626 99 45; www.jhm.nl; JD Meijerplein 2-4; adult/child under 13yr/child 13-17yr/senior & student €7.50/free/3/4.50; ☎ 11am-5pm, closed Yom Kippur

Impressive in scale and scope, the museum is housed in a beautifully restored complex of four Ashkenazic synagogues from the 17th and 18th centuries. The enormous Great Synagogue is home to two exhibitions – the history of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1600–1890; and Religion, about Judaism and Jewish traditions. Exhibits start with the pillars of Jewish identity and gradually give way to an engaging portrait of Jewish life in the city, with profiles of key figures and displays of religious items. The English-language audio tour is excellent (no extra charge). The museum also contains a bright new café serving kosher dishes.

## GASSAN DIAMONDS Map pp62-5

☎ 622 53 33; www.gassandiamonds.com; Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173-175; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm

A short walk from Waterlooplein, this vast workshop demonstrates how a rough, ungainly clump of rock is transformed into a girl's best friend. You'll get a quick primer in assessing the gems for quality, and ample opportunities to buy. The one-hour tour is the best of its kind in town.

The factory sits on Uilenburg, one of the rectangular islands reclaimed in the 1580s during a sudden influx of Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal. In the 1880s, Gassan became the first diamond factory to use steam power.

## PORTUGUESE-ISRAELITE SYNAGOGUE Map pp62-5

☎ 624 53 51; www.esnoga.com; Mr Visserplein 3; adult/child 10-17yr €6.50/4; ☎ 10am-4pm Sun-Fri Apr-Oct, to 4pm Sun-Thu, to 2pm Fri Nov-Mar Built between 1671 and 1675 by Amsterdam's Sephardic community, this edifice was the largest synagogue in Europe of its time. The architect, Elias Bouman, was inspired by the Temple of Solomon, but the building's classical lines are typical of the Dutch capital. It was restored after the war and is in use today.

The interior features massive pillars and some two dozen brass candelabra, suspended from the ceiling and lit for evening services. The large library belonging to the Ets Haim seminary is one of the oldest and most important Jewish book collections in Europe.

## TRIPPENHUIS Map pp62-5

Kloveniersburgwal 29 Making their fortune in arms-dealing, the Trip brothers commissioned a young Dutch architect, Justus Vingboons, to build the Trippenhuys in 1660. It's a greystone mansion with eight Corinthian columns across two houses – one for each brother – and in a nod to their profession, the chimneys are shaped like mortars. It's closed to the public.

## STOPERA Map pp62-5

☎ 551 81 17; Waterlooplein 22 This hulking white pile between Waterlooplein and the Amstel houses both the *stadhuys* (city hall) and the opera, hence the name 'Stopera' (1986). The building's design was highly controversial, and protest delayed construction for two decades. When it was finally completed, one critic derided the Stopera as having 'all the charm of an Ikea chair'. Our view: yea on the music theatre, nay on city hall.

See p200 for details of performances in the *Muziektheater*. There are usually free lunch-time concerts on Tuesdays. In the arcade between city hall and the theatre,

## TAKING A NAP

It is widely known that Amsterdam (and indeed more than half the Netherlands) lies a couple of metres below sea level, but when's the last time you heard anyone ask which sea level? In fact, sea level varies around the globe and even around the Netherlands. The average level of the former Zuiderzee, in the lee of Holland, was slightly lower than that of the North Sea along Holland's exposed west coast.

A display in the arcade of the Stopera shows the ins and outs of Normaal Amsterdams Peil (NAP; Normal Amsterdam Level), established in the 17th century as the average high-water mark of the Zuiderzee. This still forms the zero reference for elevation anywhere in the country and is also used in Germany and several other European countries.

Water in the canals is kept at 40cm below NAP and many parts of the city lie lower still. Water columns represent different sea levels, as well as the highest level of disastrous floods in 1953 (4.55m above NAP). Information sheets explain the details.

you'll find a display on NAP water levels (see the boxed text, [above](#)).

## WATERLOOPLEIN [Map pp62-5](#)

This square was once known as Vlooienburg ('flea town'), a good description for the wares on offer here today ([p151](#)). The street market was started in 1880 when two canals were filled in, and Jewish traders living around the neighbouring Jodenbree-straat were allowed to vend their wares here. It was so successful that in 1893 it became a daily market, apart from on the Sabbath (it's now closed on Sunday only). Since the 1980s the square has stood in the shadow of the Stopera, but the market is usually jam-packed with sharp-eyed customers seeking antique knick-knacks, imitation Diesel jeans and cheap bicycle locks (highly recommended).

## TUNFUN [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 689 43 00; [www.tunfun.nl](#); Mr Visserplein 7; adult & child under 1yr/child 1-12yr free/€7.50; 🕒 10am-6pm (last entry 5pm)

This cool indoor playground is located in a former traffic underpass, an unused eyesore for over a decade. These days kids can build, climb, roll, draw, jump on trampolines and play on a soccer pitch. There's even a children's disco – this is Amsterdam – and a café serving *poftertjes* (little pancakes). Kids must be accompanied by an adult. It gets rather busy when the weather's bad.

## PINTOHUIS (OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK) [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 624 31 84; [www.oba.nl](#); St Antoniesbreestraat 69; admission free; 🕒 2-8pm Mon & Wed, 2-5pm Fri, 11am-4pm Sat

The street that runs from Nieuwmarkt Sq towards Waterlooplein is St Antoniesbree-

straat, once a busy street that lost its old buildings during the construction of the metro line. One of the original buildings still standing is the Pintohuis, once owned by a wealthy Sephardic Jew, Isaac de Pinto, who had it remodelled with Italianate pilasters in the 1680s. It's now a *bibliotheek* (library) – pop inside to admire the beautiful ceiling frescos while you can, for it's threatened with closure.

## ZUIDERKERK [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 552 79 87; Zuiderkerkhof 72; admission free; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat

Near the Pintohuis, a passageway through the modern *Pentagon housing estate* leads to the Zuiderkerk, the 'Southern Church' built by Hendrick de Keyser ([p48](#)). His tower, 1m off plumb, dates from 1614. This was the first custom-built Protestant church in Amsterdam – still Catholic in design but no choir. The final church service was held here in 1929 and at the end of WWII it served as a morgue.

Now thoroughly modern inside, the Zuiderkerk houses the Municipal Centre for Physical Planning and Public Housing, displays on urban planning and the occasional art exhibition.

## OOSTINDISCH HUIS [Map pp62-5](#)

East Indies House; Oude Hoogstraat 24

This is the former office of the mighty VOC, the Dutch East India Company (which was the very first multinational). You could easily walk past it, as there's no sign or plaque to identify it. This sweeping complex, built between 1551 and 1643, was attributed to Hendrick de Keyser, the busy city architect. On the Kloveniersburgwal side you can see that the gables defy convention by tilting backward, making

## AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 2: PETER MOSKOS *Simon Sellars*

Peter Moskos, along with Toine Rikken, founded the St Nicolaas Boat Club in 1997, a boat-tour company that provides an alternative angle on Amsterdam and its waterlogged history. I asked Peter to regale me with his unique perspective.

### Favourite area of Amsterdam?

On a boat in the IJ. There's no better place to understand the importance of water and shipping to Amsterdam's history – plus it's beautiful out there.

### And your least favourite?

Any big, ugly road with too many cars, although architecturally every place has something interesting and can tell you something about urban planning.

### What's the biggest misconception about Amsterdam?

That it's the world's sex capital. It's not – the Dutch just have the sense to put it all out in the open and capitalise on it. And while it may be the world's recreational-drug capital, stop bingeing and enjoy it like you live here year round.

### Tell me your favourite 'Amsterdam experience'.

Biking and boating. And Koninginnedag (Queen's Day; [p17](#)) – the biggest drunk garage sale in the world.

### Least favourite?

The weather – especially the winter weather. Or the winter weather in the summer. And the rain that never stops.

### What Amsterdam-specific film or book would you recommend?

The film *Amsterdamed* is fun, with a great high-speed boat chase, but it doesn't depict anything of reality. *Simon* is the best Amsterdam film ever – and maybe the best-ever Dutch movie. Jan-Willem van der Wetering's cop stories are pretty good, but Geert Mak's *Amsterdam* is the single best book about the city.

### Your favourite Amsterdam bar and coffeeshop?

Any brown café in the Jordaan is great – get a *jenever* and a beer and talk with the locals. The coffeeshop De Rokerij has a supercool atmosphere – sort of how I imagine a 19th-century Chinese opium den would have been. And of course my brother's bar at Boom Chicago, because that's the home base for our boats.

### What about restaurants?

Semhar on the Marnixstraat – the only Ethiopian restaurant in town that makes its *injara* bread with *tef*, the traditional Ethiopian flour. Semhar is distinctive in a city that has a great variety of food but very few truly memorable restaurants. I like the herring stands on bridges. A *broodje haring* is a very cheap lunch – so Dutch, and you just can't get it anywhere else. Eel is also delicious.

### What's Amsterdam's best-kept secret?

Co-ed, naked saunas that aren't sleazy. I like Fenomeen out past Vondelpark – essential when the weather is bad.

### Favourite local slang or swear words?

I'm trying to get '*spetterend*' back into the vocab – it's a very uncool way of saying 'cool'. But the Dutch have a shortage of swear words, so they often resort to English.

### What's your strangest Amsterdam bike story?

A guy wearing a jockstrap on rollerblades. He used to be everywhere, even in the cold weather. He disappeared a couple of years ago. Perhaps he caught pneumonia and passed on.

### What annoys you the most about Amsterdam: the dog shit, the service or something else?

Taxis. Avoid them like dog shit. But the dog-shit problem is basically a thing of the past – if you have a problem with it now, you should have seen how it was before. I really have to say the bad service, without a doubt – it's legendary.

### How has living in Amsterdam changed you?

It's made me realise that bikes are the best form of urban transit possible. And that, basically, this is a city that works. There's something to be said for literally living on top of each other and in close-knit surroundings. It's given me the opportunity to see how a large city can allow everyone to do their own thing without getting all bent out of shape about it.

### Describe the St Nicolaas Boat Club for someone new to it.

We're a friendly entry point to understanding Amsterdam from the greatest perspective of all: the canals. We offer cosy rides with knowledgeable pilots, and all we ask for is a donation at the end.



them seem much larger. Pass through the carved Tuscan entrance vault to reach the grand inner courtyard, and on the opposite side you'll spy a small VOC emblem above the door. The mighty VOC sailed into rough waters and was dissolved in 1798.

### MOZES EN AÄRONKERK Map pp62-5

Moses & Aaron Church; ☎ 622 13 05; www.mozeshuis.nl; Waterlooplein 205

This neoclassical Catholic church, built in 1841 on the northeastern corner of Waterlooplein, shows that this wasn't exclusively a Jewish area. It replaced the 'clandestine' Catholic church that occupied two houses named Mozes and Aäron in what is now the rear of the church along Jodenbreestraat (note the wall tablet of Moses above the street corner). Despite its impressive organ, it is no longer used as a church, but rather by social, cultural and educational organisations which often hold exhibitions. Otherwise, the church is generally closed to the public.

### MONTELBAANSTOREN Map pp62-5

Montelbaan Tower; Oude Schans 2

The lower part of this striking tower was built to strengthen Amsterdam's eastern defences in 1512. Positioned on the old city wall, it gave sentries a good view of suspicious characters on the wharves along Oude Schans. The octagonal base and open wooden steeple were added in 1606, to dampen the bells on the clock after the neighbours complained. Just a few years later the tower began to list under the weight, but residents attached cables and pulled it upright. The elegant tower has two sets of bellworks, four clock faces and a nautical vane like the one on the top of the Oude Kerk.

## RED LIGHTS & NIEUWMARKT

### Walking Tour

**1 Nationaal Monument** Begin at the soaring **Nationaal Monument** (p71) and head north along the Damrak past the elegant **Beurs van Berlage** (p69), designed by HP Berlage, founder of the Amsterdam School of architecture. Heading southeast along Oudebrugsteeg, you'll hit Warmoesstraat, where you can sample the city's wild side. (If that's too much for you, turn back now!)

**2 Oude Kerk** The venerable **Oude Kerk** (p75) is your unlikely gateway to the Red Light District proper. At the nearby **Prostitution Information Centre** (p76) you can pick up maps to your desires or see what a sex worker's quarters look like from the inside (without paying for the sex worker, but please leave a donation for the centre).

**3 Museum Amstelkring** North of here is the **Museum Amstelkring** (p75), an average-looking canal house that has a surprisingly beautiful house of worship on the top floor. Before being turned into a museum in 1888, this clandestine church was one of the relatively few places in Amsterdam where Catholicism could be practiced.

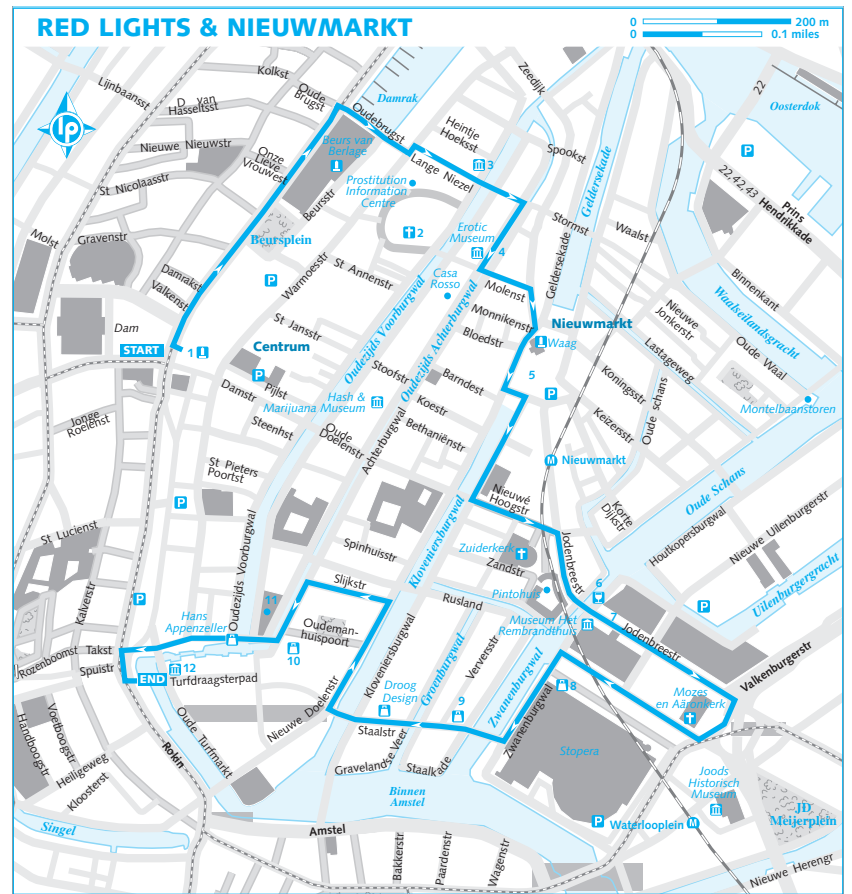
**4 Oudezijds Achterburgwal** A jump over to the **Oudezijds Achterburgwal** and then south takes you past the low-key **Erotic Museum** (p76), the famous **Casa Rosso** (p76) erotic theatre and the **Hash & Marijuana Museum** (p76).

**5 Nieuwmarkt** In **Nieuwmarkt** you'll find the historic and multitowered **Waag** (Weigh House; p78). Heading south from Nieuwmarkt, along Kloveniersburgwal, note the impossibly narrow **Kleine Trippenhuis**. **Nieuwe Hoogstraat** leads you to the elegant **Zuiderkerk** (p80), with the 17th-century **Pintohuis** (now a library; p80) nearly opposite.

**6 De Sluyswacht** Across the Oude Schans, **De Sluyswacht** (p184) makes an ideal beer break, with a classic view of the canal and the **Montelbaanstoren** (left). The **Museum Het Rembrandthuis** (p78) is across the street.

**7 Jodenbreestraat** A sweep down **Jodenbreestraat** takes you past the **Mozes en Aäronkerk** (left), a one-time clandestine Catholic church that was expanded in grand style, with large sandstone columns and twin belfries. About 100m southeast is the **Joods Historisch Museum** (p79), a moving collection of art, icons and historical objects from Amsterdam's storied Jewish past.

**8 Waterlooplein market** This renowned **flea market** (p151) faces the **Stopera** (p79), the modern opera house cum city hall. On a sunny day it's fun to peruse the vintage clothes, antiques and bicycle parts on display under the vendors' canopies, the air thick with the scent of *frites*. Your shopping finished, cross the bridge over the Zwanenburgwal.



### WALK FACTS

Start Nationaal Monument  
End Allard Pierson Museum  
Distance 4.5km  
Duration 2½ hours

**9 Puccini Bomboni** Chances are the chocolate aroma of **Puccini Bomboni** (p142) will suck you inside the shop; its dozens of delectable, freshly made varieties have killed many a diet. Along Straalstraat there's also **Droog Design** (p142), whose clever innovations turn tired old living rooms into sleek exhibition spaces.

**10 Oudemanhuispoort book market** Head north along Kloveniersburgwal and turn into the covered arcade joining Oude-

zijds Achterburgwal, passing the pretty inner courtyard of the University of Amsterdam to reach the **Oudemanhuispoort book market** (p151). A fixture since 1897, stacks of used titles (sometimes quite rare) are sold from the wooden chests bolted to the walls.

**11 Huis aan de Drie Grachten** Carry on past the quaint **Huis aan de Drie Grachten** (House on the Three Canals; p48), which in the 16th century housed a brewery owned by Amsterdam's enterprising mayor. You can inspect the classy jewellery shops along Grimburgwal, including **Hans Appenzeller** (p141).

**12 Allard Pierson Museum** Finish your walk with a visit to ancient Egypt in the **Allard Pierson Museum** (p73), which has galleries full of fascinating items.

# JORDAAN

Drinking & Smoking p185; Eating p161; Shopping p142; Sleeping p214

Though gentrified today, the Jordaan was a rough working-class district in the early 17th century. As the Canal Belt was extended, it became clear that a place was needed to house all the artisans, canal-diggers, carpenters, bridge-builders and stonemasons employed by the rich. So the city's architects got to work and quickly drove in the first stakes.

Pleasant the Jordaan was not, at least in the beginning. All those smelly, noisy or otherwise useful but disgusting industries that were banned from the centre – tanneries, breweries, sugar refineries, smithies and coopers, among others – set up shop here just outside the town walls, and thrived. The quarter drew working talent from around Europe at a time when Amsterdam was practically a city-state, with the deep pockets to match.

The name 'Jordaan' wasn't used until the 18th century, and its origin is unclear. Some believe it comes from the French *jardin* (garden), as many Huguenots – religious refugees known as the French Calvinists – settled in the market gardens beyond the city walls. Many streets here are named after trees and flowers. But some historians contend that the name had biblical connotations and referred to the Jordan River.

For centuries this was a boisterous quarter whose colourful, outspoken residents were notoriously difficult to govern. Many people were poor. By the early 20th century one in seven Amsterdammers lived in the Jordaan, and up to 1000 people were packed into small city blocks in appalling conditions.

Riots occurred on a regular basis. The infamous Eel Uprising of 1886 left 25 people dead after police intervened in a game of eel-pulling. Then came the Potato Uprising, a major protest over jobless benefits and a series of other incidents that felt like civil war. Roads were tarred because brick paving could be used as projectiles during riots.

Around the same time, many of the Jordaan's ditches and narrow canals were filled in to improve sanitation. Their names still recall the *grachten* (canals): Elandgracht, Lindengracht, Palmgracht and Rozengracht, now a major thoroughfare. Bloemgracht (p87) was the grandest of the canals and, for that reason, was never filled in. Many wealthy artisans built smaller versions of the patricians' canal houses on the Bloemgracht.

In the 1960s and '70s the Jordaan lost much of its working-class character as residents moved to more spacious digs in the suburbs. In came the students, artists and tertiary-sector professionals (read: *yups*, or yuppies), which caused some growing pains (see the boxed text, p88). Some changes have preserved the old ways: the area south of Rozengracht, for instance, was renowned for its workshops and artists' studios, and many galleries are still located there today.

A certain misty-eyed, heart-on-your-sleeve romance pervades the district. This is the Amsterdam of accordion ballads, where daily life played out on the streets, houses were tiny but tidy, and life was either joy or tragedy. The songs bring to mind the lace curtains and window-box geraniums where Auntie Cori watched the street with the help of a *spionnetje* (spy mirror) attached to the window-sill. It was also the picture of the neighbourhood as social unit, where everyone did absolutely everything together – living, working, shopping, schooling and entertainment.

Such popular conceptions still hold true, as you will discover when you wander the narrow lanes. Take your time and don't worry if you get lost (which you will); there are plenty of inviting pubs and restaurants, offbeat shops and weird little art galleries to grab your attention.

The area doesn't hold many official sights, but a worthy exception is the Pianola Museum (opposite), where dozens of old player pianos are fired up for in-house demonstrations. Probably the city's most charming open-air market, the Noordermarkt (p151), is held at the northern tip of the district by the Noorderkerk.

A caretaker of sentimental value is Johnny Jordaanplein, a shady little square situated just west of Prinsengracht, at the corner of Elandsgracht. That colourful painted hut – a municipal transformer station – proudly displays the lyric '*Amsterdam, wat bent je mooi*' (Amsterdam, how beautiful you are) from a song by Johnny, the greatest expression of Jordaan's ethos since the last riots. Behind the hut you'll find members of the Jordaan musical hall of fame, cast in bronze.

Haarlemmerdijk, the extension of the main thoroughfare Haarlemmerstraat, was part of the original sea dyke and the road to Haarlem. Warehouses sprang up as well; many have been converted to romantic housing. With train lines and expressways, this district has reverted to its more intimate character, and recent years have seen it boom as a centre for the same sorts of quirky shops, pubs and restaurants that characterise the Jordaan.

## BROUWERSGRACHT Map p86

Pretty as a Golden Age painting, the 'Brewers Canal' took its name from the many breweries located here in the 16th and 17th centuries. Goods such as leather, coffee, whale oil and spices were stored and processed here in giant warehouses, such as those with the row of spout gables at 188–194. Amsterdam's last distillery of *jenever*, De Ooievaar, was located on the corner of Driehoekstraat. The Brouwersgracht was voted 'most beautiful street' in Amsterdam by newspaper *Het Parool* in a 2007 readers survey, and is a great place to stroll (see p89), not to mention see the waterborne action on Queen's Day (p17).

## NOORDERKERK Map p86

Northern Church; ☎ 626 64 36; Noordermarkt 48; admission free; ☎ 10.30am–3pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 11am–1pm Sat, 10am–noon & 7–8.30pm Sun  
Near the northern end of the Prinsengracht, this imposing Calvinist church was completed in 1623 for the 'common' people in the Jordaan. (The upper classes attended the Westerkerk further south). It was built in the shape of a broad Greek cross (four arms of equal length) around a central pulpit, giving the entire congregation unimpeded access to the word of God in suitably sober surroundings. This design, unusual at the time, would become common for Protestant churches throughout the country.

## NOORDERMARKT Map p86

Northern Market; Noorderkerkplein; ☎ markets 8am–1pm Mon, 10am–3pm Sat  
A market square since the early 1600s, the plaza in front of the Noorderkerk now hosts several lively markets a week. Monday morning there's a flea market with wonderful bargains; early on Saturday morning

## HOFJES

A charming legacy of the Jordaan are its many *hofjes*, the courtyard homes built by wealthy benefactors to house elderly people and widows – a noble act in the days before social security. Some *hofjes* are real gems, set back from the street with lovely prim gardens and beautifully restored houses. Unfortunately, many courtyards became such tourist magnets that residents complained, and they were closed to the public (a big exception being the Begijnhof, p68).

However, if you should find any of the following open, try to take a discreet peek. The oldest *hofje* is the **Linden-hofje** (Lindengracht 94–112), dating from 1614; the **Suyckerhofje** (Lindengracht 149–163) is a charming *hofje* founded in 1670. **Karthuizerhofje** (Karthuizersstraat 89–171) is a *hofje* for widows, dating from 1650 and on the site of a former Carthusian monastery.

**Claes Claeshofje** (1e Egelantiersdwarstraat 3), also known as Anso's Hofje, has three courtyards dating from around 1630. **St Andrieshofje** (Egelantiersgracht 107–141), the second-oldest surviving *hofje*, was finished in 1617, and founded by cattle farmer Jeff Gerritsoon. **Venetiae** (Elandsstraat 106–136) was founded in the mid-1600s by a merchant who traded with Venice, and features a very pretty garden.

# top picks

## JORDAAN

- Wander the delightful backstreets for one-of-a-kind shops, galleries and cafés full of *gezelligheid*.
- Noordermarkt** (left) Browse the Jordaan's leafiest, most adorable street markets for crumbly cheeses and exotic herbs.
- Pianola Museum** (below) Listen to rare musical gems immortalised for the player piano.
- Houseboat Museum** (p88) Experience the charms and challenges of life on the canals.
- Hofjes** (below) Explore the manicured gardens of these time-warped courtyards.
- Brouwersgracht** (left) Inspect handsome old warehouses on what is surely Amsterdam's comeliest canal.

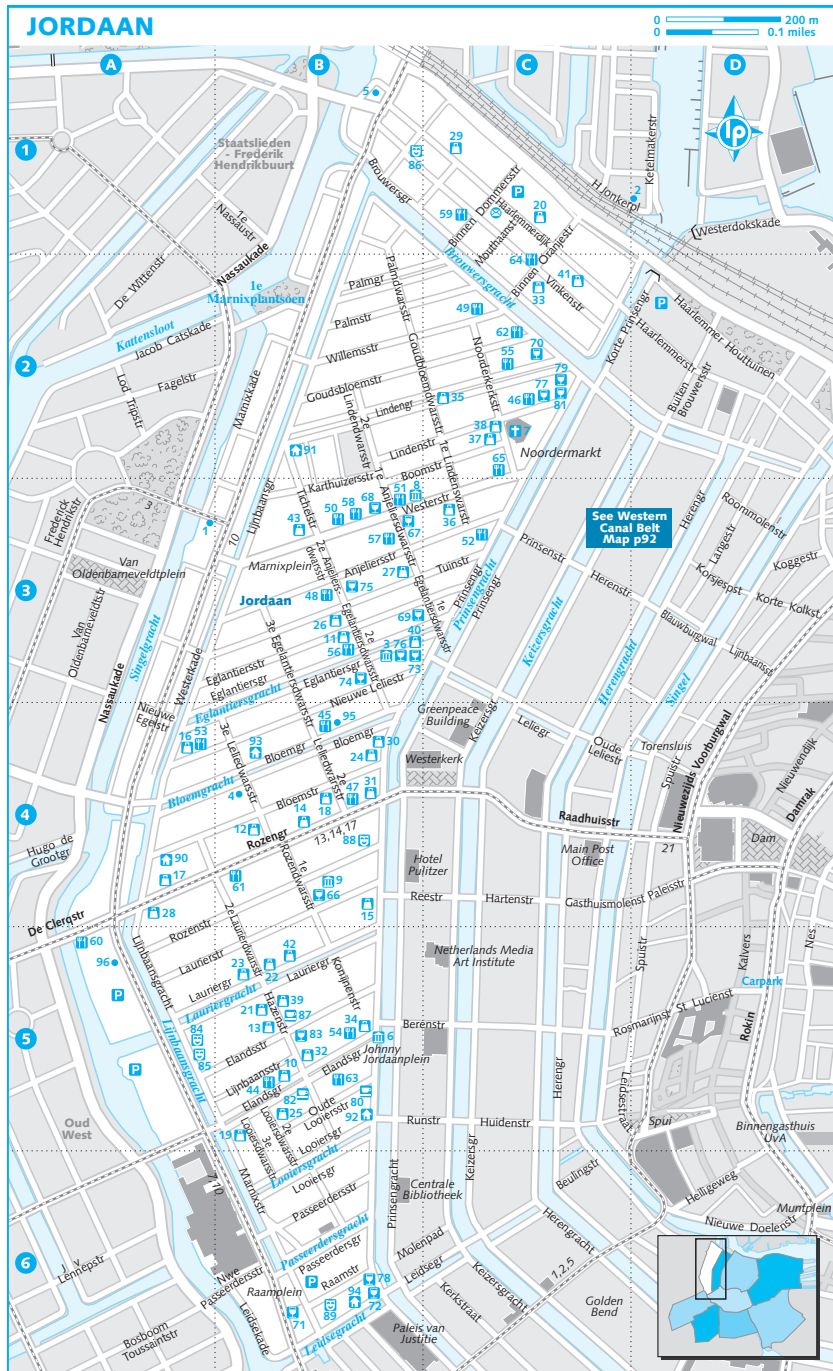
there's a bird market (in cages, a holdover from the former livestock market), followed till early/mid-afternoon by a *boerenmarkt* (farmers market) with herbs and organic produce. There's a nice selection of cafés surrounding the square, including **Winkel** (p163) on the southwest corner, home of some of the city's best apple pie.

## PIANOLA MUSEUM Map p86

☎ 627 96 24; www.pianola.nl; Westerstraat 106; adult/child under 12yr/student & senior €5/3/4; ☎ 2–5pm Sun

This is a very special place, crammed with Pianolas from the early 1900s. The museum has a stock of 50 Pianolas, although only a dozen are on display at a given time, as well as nearly 20,000 music rolls. There's even a player pipe organ. Every month player-piano concerts are held, featuring





## JORDAAN

### INFORMATION

Marnixbad.....	1	A3
Squash City.....	2	D1

### SIGHTS

Amsterdam Tulip Museum.....	3	C3
De Drie Hendrieken.....	4	B4
Haarlemmerpoort.....	5	B1
Houseboat Museum.....	6	B5
Noorderkerk.....	7	C2
Noordermarkt.....	(see 37)	
Pianola Museum.....	8	B3
Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.....	9	B4

### SHOPPING

Arnold Cornelis.....	10	B5
Back Beat Records.....	11	B3
Boerenmarkt.....	(see 37)	
Broer & Zus.....	12	B4
Cats & Things.....	13	B5
Christodoulou & Lamé.....	14	B4
Claire V.....	15	B4
De Belly.....	16	A4
De Kasstoor.....	17	A4
De Lach.....	18	B4
De Looier Antiques Market.....	19	B5
Discostars.....	20	C1
English Bookshop.....	21	B5
Eva Damave.....	22	B5
Fotografia.....	23	B5
Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento.....	24	B4
Goldstrasse.....	25	B5
Het Oud-Hollandsch Snoepwinkelje.....	26	B3
Hug Gallery for International Photography.....	27	B3
International Design Centrum.....	28	A1
JG Beune.....	29	C4
Josine Bokhoven.....	30	B4

Kitsch Kitchen.....	31	B4
Kleurgamma.....	32	B5
La Diabla.....	33	C2
La Savonnerie.....	34	B5
Lindengracht Market.....	35	C2
Mechanisch Speelgoed.....	36	C3
Noordermarkt.....	37	C2
Nou Moe Stripwinkel.....	38	C2
Petsalon.....	39	B5
Rock Archive.....	40	C3
't Zonnetje.....	41	C2
Torch Gallery.....	42	B5
Westermarkt.....	43	B3

### EATING

Balthazar's Keuken.....	44	B5
Bloemgracht.....	45	B4
Bordewijk.....	46	C2
Broodje Mokum.....	47	B4
Burger's Patio.....	48	B3
Café Vlinder.....	49	C2
Cinema Paradiso.....	50	B3
De Blaffende Vis.....	51	B3
De Bolhoed.....	52	C3
De Vliegende Schotel.....	53	A4
Divan.....	54	B5
Duende.....	55	C2
Japanese Pancake World.....	56	B3
Jean Jean.....	57	B3
Local.....	58	B3
Moeder's Pot Eethuisje.....	59	C1
Moeders.....	60	A5
Nomads.....	61	B4
Noodle & Go.....	62	C2
Rakang Thai.....	63	B5
Small World Catering.....	64	C2
Winkel.....	65	C2

### DRINKING & SMOKING

Café de Laurierboom.....	66	B5
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Café Nol.....	67	B3
Café 't Monumentje.....	68	B3
Café 't Smalle.....	69	B3
Café Thijssen.....	70	C2
De Koe.....	71	B6
De Pieper.....	72	B6
De Prins.....	73	B3
De Reiger.....	74	B3
De Tuin.....	75	B3
De Twee Zwaantjes.....	76	C3
Finch.....	77	C2
G-Spot.....	78	B6
Het Papeneiland.....	79	C2
La Tertulia.....	80	B5
Proust.....	81	C2
Rokerij.....	82	B5
Saarein.....	83	B5

### NIGHTLIFE & ARTS

Korsakoff.....	84	A5
Maloe Melo.....	85	A5
Movies.....	86	B1

### GAY & LESBIAN

Café Sugar.....	87	B5
COC Amsterdam.....	88	B4
Thermos Day Sauna.....	89	B6

### SLEEPING

Christian Youth Hostel 'The Shelter Jordaan'.....	90	A4
Hotel Acacia.....	91	B2
Hotel Amsterdam.....	92	B5
Hotel van Onna.....	93	B4
International Budget Hostel.....	94	B6

### TRANSPORT

Bike City.....	95	B4
Moped Rental Service Gilex.....	96	A5

anything from Mozart to Fats Waller and rare classical or jazz tunes composed especially for the instrument. The curator gives demonstrations with great zest.

### AMSTERDAM TULIP MUSEUM [Map p86](#)

☎ 421 00 95; [www.amsterdamtulipmuseum.com](http://www.amsterdamtulipmuseum.com); Prinsengracht 112; adult/child €2/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat

Sponsored by a bulb-growing company, this small, rather clinical exhibit traces the prince of petals from its beginnings in Turkey. Displays cover Tulipmania (p90), bulbs as food in the war years, and present-day scientific methods of growing and harvesting. A highlight is the tulip paintings by 17th-century painter Judith Leijster, a student of Frans Hals (p33). The gift shop is one-stop shopping for all your tulip souvenirs.

### EGLANTIERSGRACHT [Map p86](#)

Many parts of the Jordaan are named after trees and flowers, and this canal takes its

name from the eglantine rose, or sweet-brier. (You can see its dainty pink petals and hooked prickles in many a Jordaan garden.) Built for artisans and skilled tradesmen, the houses here are scaled-down versions of those in the Western Canal Belt. There are many *hofjes* (courtyards) in the Jordaan, including the St Andieshofje at Eglantiersgracht 107-141 (see the boxed text, p85).

### BLOEMGRACHT [Map p86](#)

In the 17th century the 'Herengracht of the Jordaan', as the gorgeous Bloemgracht was called, was home to paint and sugar factories, and boasted a large number of fine gabled houses. A striking example is De Drie Hendrieken, built in a sober Renaissance style. The gable stones above the ground floor depict a townsman, a farmer and a seafarer. Artists also lived on Bloemgracht, including Jurriaen Andriessen, whose work is displayed in the Rijksmuseum.



## OOH JORDAAN, HOW LUVVERLY YOU ARE

Eibert Draisma is the author of *Jordaan*, a potted history of this popular district to the west of Amsterdam's centre. Draisma has worked at the local community centre, the Wijkcentrum Jordaan, for the past quarter-century. He and his colleague Wim Wassenaar chatted about what makes the Jordaan so special.

### What's the biggest change you've seen in the Jordaan over the last couple of decades?

Draisma: It's much better now. It was a dilapidated slum area until the '80s. What a huge difference! The neighbourhood looks really nice now, and people want to live here again.

### How many original Jordaaners still live here?

Draisma: Maybe 15% born and bred. It's a group that's slowly dying out, but in recent years some of the 'indigenous' have moved back.

### Where did the rebellious attitude of the Jordaaners come from?

Draisma: Resistance to injustice, poverty and oppression. Other areas also suffered, but the Jordaan of the late 19th century was a densely populated district with deplorable conditions – large families in tiny, run-down homes.

### And are they still rebellious?

Wassenaar: Last year Jordaaners were up in arms over plans to redig a canal on the Elandsgracht, with an underground parking garage. The Jordaaners weren't asked for approval, only the population of Amsterdam as a whole found it a good idea. And the plan was eventually called off (smile).

### What do you think of the Jordaan's newer residents, the yuppies?

Draisma: It's been said that the Jordaan is no longer what it was – a *volksbuurt*, a district for the common people. But this talk is exaggerated. If you look at the city's figures you'll see that the overwhelming majority of Jordaan residents have quite average incomes. Wealthy people have also moved in, but it's a limited group. You notice this on the street, and it makes for a nice mix of people. Sure, there are complaints about the rich and yuppies, but that's all part of the Jordaan.

### When does everyone not get along?

Draisma: The carillon of the Westerkerk plays a little melody every 15 minutes, even at night. People new to the area are woken up, get irritated and complain to the local council. The old Jordaaners say the carillon is a part of the neighbourhood. 'If the carillon is turned off at night, then we'll lie awake,' they say. You can't touch the carillon, and if you do, there'll be a huge performance and discussions with a lot of verbal abuse.

Wassenaar: When people buy a new home here they have to fit in quickly, go through a sort of citizenship course. If they don't make an effort to participate they get looked at strangely. If you want to feel at home, you have to get to know your neighbours. The Jordaan lifestyle isn't for everyone.

### I understand the Jordaan is still the most densely populated neighbourhood of the Netherlands.

Draisma: Yes. It's amazing, because when you walk around it feels a bit like a village, with all the greenery, potted plants and little gardens. I think the Jordaan should be used more often as a model of compact, livable neighbourhood planning. But it's difficult to reproduce the Jordaan elsewhere. In other parts of the city there are more tourist attractions, but it's the little things that are nice here – the lanes, the old façades, the funny little shops. Visitors like all of this, think it's *gezellig* (cosy). The Jordaan is certainly not spectacular, but it has charm.

### What's the biggest challenge to the Jordaan at the moment?

Draisma: That people with lower incomes still be able to afford to live here. There's an enormous pressure on rents due to the popularity of the area.

## HOUSEBOAT MUSEUM Map p86

☎ 427 07 50; [www.houseboatmuseum.nl](http://www.houseboatmuseum.nl); Prinsengracht, opposite No 296; adult/child under 152cm €3.25/2.50; 🕒 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 11am-5pm Fri-Sun Nov-Feb, closed most of Jan

This quirky museum, a 23m-long sailing barge from 1914, offers a good sense of how *gezellig* (cosy) life can be on the water. The actual displays are minimal, but you can watch a slide show of houseboats pretty and ghastly, and inspect the sleeping, living, cooking and dining quarters with all mod cons. In case you were won-

dering, houseboat toilets used to drain directly into the canals, but now most have sewerage hook-ups.

## STEDELIJK MUSEUM BUREAU AMSTERDAM Map p86

Municipal Museum Office; ☎ 422 04 71; [www.smba.nl](http://www.smba.nl); Rozenstraat 59; admission free; 🕒 11am-5pm Tue-Sun

Don't blink or you might walk right past this unobtrusive outpost, a 'project space' of the leading Stedelijk Museum; it's in a one-time

clothing workshop on a very quiet block. Exhibits here – from painting and sculpture to new media and installation pieces – mix contemporary artists who have some connection to the city with some 'international context'. Shows change about every couple of weeks; ring to make sure it's not closed while changing exhibitions.

## HAARLEMMERPOORT Map p86

### Haarlem Gate; Haarlemmerplein

Once a defensive gate to the city, the Haarlemmerpoort marked the start of the busy route to Haarlem, a major trading route. The structure was finished just in time for King William II's staged entry on his 1840 coronation, hence its little-known official name of Willemspoort (see the plaque inside). Traffic no longer runs through the gate since a bypass was built over the Westerkanal. Today this grand archway is home to apartments with an alluring view of the canal and Westerpark beyond.

## JORDAAN

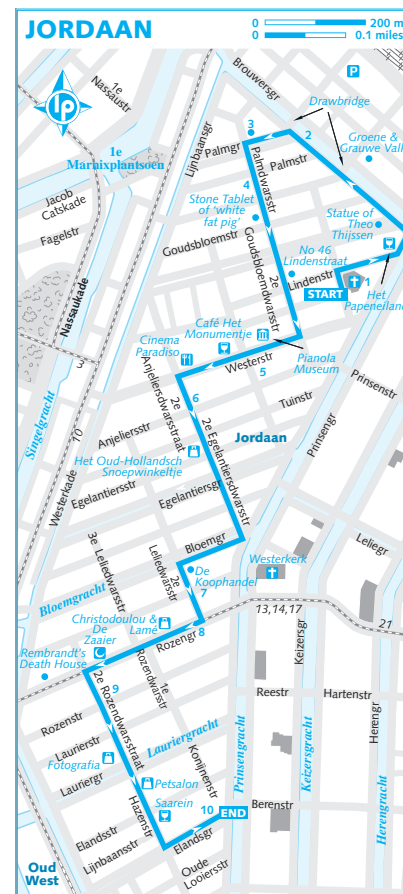
### Walking Tour

**1 Noorderkerk** Begin at the **Noorderkerk** (p85), site of Amsterdam's most attractive **farmers market** (p151). The impressive, cross-shaped church was revolutionary at the time, providing the working-class congregation of the Jordaan with alter views from four transepts.

**2 Brouwersgracht** Head north along the Prinsengracht to pretty **Brouwersgracht**. Fall into a terrace chair at **Het Papeneiland** (p186) and order a coffee. As you move east along Brouwersgracht, you'll spy a **statue of educator Theo Thijssen** scrutinising a pupil's work, and the fantastic old warehouses **Greene & Grauwe Valk** (Green & Grey Falcon), their huge red shutters swung open on five floors.

**3 Rapenhofje** At the second drawbridge, turn left into the wide, shady Palmgracht, and look out for the modest red door to the **Rapenhofje**, at Nos 28–38, watched over by a coat of arms and a white porthole window. This placid little courtyard was home to one of Amsterdam's oldest almshouses (1648).

**4 Palmdwarsstraat** This part of the Jordaan has a village-like character, and moving south along **Palmdwarsstraat** you'll pass tiny food shops frequented by the locals. Note the **stone tablet** of



## WALK FACTS

Start Noorderkerk  
End Johnny Jordaanplein  
Distance 2.5km  
Duration One hour

the 'white fat pig' over the butcher-deli at 26 Goudsbloemdwarsstraat 26. Crossing over the broad Lindengracht, pause a moment to consider the quaint house at **Lindenstraat 46**, leaning at an impossible angle above street level.

**5 Westerstraat** Soon you reach **Westerstraat**, a main drag of the Jordaan, with the quirky **Pianola Museum** (p85), and such alluring places for a bite or drink as **Café 't Monumentje** (p186) or **Cinema Paradiso** (p162).

## TULIPMANIA

When it comes to investment frenzy, the Dutch tulip craze of 1636–37 ranks alongside the South Sea Bubble of 1720, the Great Crash of 1929, Enron and the Netherlands' home-grown Ahold scandal.

Tulips originated as wildflowers in Central Asia and were first cultivated by the Turks, who filled their courts with these beautiful spring blooms ('tulip' derives from the Turkish word for turban). In the mid-1500s the Habsburg ambassador to Istanbul brought some bulbs back to Vienna where the imperial botanist, Carolus Clusius, learned how to propagate them. In 1590 Clusius became director of the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden – Europe's oldest botanical garden – and had great success growing and cross-breeding tulips in Holland's cool, damp climate and fertile delta soil.

The more exotic specimens of tulip featured frilly petals and 'flamed' streaks of colour, which attracted the attention of wealthy merchants, who put them in their living rooms and hallways to impress visitors. Trickle-down wealth and savings stoked the taste for exotica in general, and tulip growers arose to service the demand.

Ironically, the frilly petals and colour streaks were symptoms of a virus – healthy tulips at the time were solid, smooth and monotone; the virus itself wasn't discovered until the 20th century. In the 17th century Holland's most beautiful tulips were heavily cross-bred, making them even more susceptible to the virus and difficult to cultivate, and their blossoms unpredictable.

A speculative frenzy ensued, and people paid top florin for the finest bulbs, many of which changed hands time and again before they sprouted. Vast profits were made and speculators fell over themselves to outbid each other. Bidding often took place in taverns and was fuelled by alcohol, which no doubt added to the enthusiasm.

At the height of the Tulipmania in November 1636, a single bulb of the legendary *Semper augustus* variety fetched the equivalent of 10 years' wages for the average worker; a couple of *Viceroy* bulbs cost the equivalent of an Amsterdam canal house. One unfortunate foreign sailor made himself rather unpopular with his employer by slicing up what he thought was an onion as a garnish for his herring. An English amateur botanist, intrigued by an unknown bulb lying in his host's conservatory, proceeded to bisect it, and was put in jail until he could raise an astronomical 4000 guilders.

Of course, this bonanza couldn't last, and when several bulb traders in Haarlem failed to fetch their expected prices in February 1637, the bottom fell out of the market. Within weeks many of the country's wealthiest merchants went bankrupt and many more people of humbler origins lost everything. Speculators who were stuck with unsold bulbs, or with bulbs that had been reserved but not yet paid for (the concept of options was invented during the Tulipmania), appealed for government action but the authorities refused to become involved in what they considered to be gambling. Thus the speculation ended.

However, love of the unusual tulip endured, and cooler-headed growers perfected their craft. To this day, the Dutch continue to be the world leaders in tulip cultivation and supply most of the bulbs planted in Europe and North America. They also excel in other bulbs such as daffodils, hyacinths and crocuses.

So what happened to the flamed, frilly tulips of the past? They're still produced but have gone out of fashion, and are now known as Rembrandt tulips because of their depiction in so many 17th-century paintings.

**6 Garden Quarter** At the 2e Anjeliersdwarstraat, turn left to enter what locals call the 'garden quarter' of cosy, ivy-clad lanes and diminutive squares. **Het Oud-Hollandsch Snoepwinkelje** (p143) is stacked high with glass jars of traditional sweets like cinnamon sticks and liquorice.

**7 Bloemgracht** Carry on south over the Eglantiersgracht to the stunning elm-lined waters of the **Bloemgracht** (p87). Plant your feet on the bridge facing east, and drink in the view. The steeple of the mighty **Westerkerk** (p93) pokes over the rooftops. Among the distinctive buildings is **De Koophandel**, a tall, incredibly narrow old warehouse at No 49.

**8 Rozengracht** At busy **Rozengracht**, sink into a colourful pillow at speciality shop **Christodoulou & Lamé** (p144). Looming over the street are the enormous towers of the former Catholic

church **De Zaaier**, now a mosque. At No 184 you can see **Rembrandt's sterfhuus** (death house), where the master painter died in 1669 (see the plaque).

**9 2e Rozendwarstraat** Turn south into **2e Rozendwarstraat**. This part of the Jordaan is a mad jumble of styles, and though the winc beams may appear decorative, they still see plenty of active duty. Further along, you'll find intriguing shops such as **Fotografia** (p143) and **Petsalon** (p145), and also a rare lesbian café, **Saarein** (p206).

**10 Johnny Jordaanplein** What better place to conclude this tour than **Johnny Jordaanplein**, a tiny square dedicated to the singer of schmaltzy tunes such as *Bij ons in de Jordaan*. There are bronze busts of Johnny and other immortals, but the real star here is the colourful utility hut splashed with nostalgic lyrics.

## WESTERN CANAL BELT

Drinking & Smoking p187; Eating p163; Shopping p145; Sleeping p215

The canals bordered by the Brouwersgracht and Leidsegracht (to the north and south respectively), the Singel to the east and the Prinsengracht to the west, are among the most gorgeous areas of town, for residents and visitors alike. They are filled with stately homes, refined museums and businesses, intimate cafés and some of the city's finest speciality shops.

This elegant area has its origins in the end of the 16th century, when the city burst its medieval walls as refugees flooded in: Jews from Portugal and Spain, and Protestants from Antwerp. In the 1580s new land was reclaimed from the IJ and the Amstel for the east side of town. In 1613 the authorities embarked on an ambitious plan that would triple the city's area, with canals sprouting to the west and the south.

The blueprint was drawn up by the city carpenter, Hendrick Jacobsz Staets, and, oddly enough, the result resembled half of a bicycle wheel, comprising semicircular and radial canals with bridges and connecting roads. Collectively, these new canals have come to be called the Grachtengordel (Canal Belt), the layout you see today.

The plan called for the whole city to be enclosed by a new outer moat, a zig-zagging canal now known as the Singelgracht. The moat's outer quays became the Nassaukade, named for the Dutch royal House of Orange-Nassau, the Stadhouderskade (for the magistrates) and Mauritskade (for Maurits of Nassau, who played a pivotal role in liberating the Netherlands from Spanish rule). Work began at the Brouwersgracht and headed south. Parcels of land were sold along the way to finance the project, buildings arose gradually, and the Western Canal Belt was completed by 1625.

Society here was clearly divided into haves and have-nots. Before the completion of the Western Canal Bank, merchants lived more or less in their warehouses, mingling with their labourers and suppliers in the thick of the city's activities. Businesses that could be annoying or offensive were banned, and bridges were fixed to exclude large vessels, though this didn't prevent barges from unloading and loading goods at the warehouses.

The wealthiest residents escaped the sweat and the stench by building mansions along the Herengracht, named after the Heeren XVII – '17 Gentlemen' – of the United East India Company. Almost as swanky was the Keizersgracht (Emperor's Canal), a nod to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I.

The Prinsengracht – after William the Silent, Prince of Orange and the first Dutch royal – was designed as a slightly cheaper canal with smaller residences, warehouses and workshops. It also acted as a barrier against the crusty working-class quarter beyond, the Jordaan. Today the Prinsengracht is the liveliest of Amsterdam's inner canals, with shops and cafés for enjoying life's summer charms. Though on the small side, apartments are relatively affordable by canal standards, and houseboats line the quays.

At the northern end of the Canal Belt, the Brouwersgracht (the Brewers' Canal) was named after the breweries that used to operate here. It's one of the most picturesque canals in town and a great place for a stroll, although it wasn't always so: throughout most of its history it was an industrial canal full of warehouses, workshops and factories banned from the residential Canal Belt. Note the almost uninterrupted row of former warehouses from No 172 to No 212. Houseboats add to the lazy, residential character.

The western part of the district is lorded over by the Westerkerk (p93), with its enormous blue-crowned steeple and gracious square, which is home to the Homomonument (p95). The area's biggest draw is the Anne Frank Huis (p93), which has excerpts of the famous diaries and some of the original furnishings of the Frank family in hiding.

Within the southern reaches of the Western Canal Belt, one of the most delightful areas is the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys), the tic-tac-toe board of Amsterdam shopping. The names of the lanes come from the trades once practiced here, mainly for animal furs and products (ie the Wolvenstraat, or Wolf's Street).

The Negen Straatjes are bounded by Reestraat, Hartenstraat and Gasthuismolensteeg to the north, Prinsengracht to the west, Singel to the east and Runstraat, Huidenstraat and Wijde Heisteeg to the south. The *straatjes* are full of quirky little shops dealing in antiques, fashions, housewares and one-offs including everything from toothbrushes to antique eyeglass frames. It's all peppered with pubs, cafés and informal dining.

## WESTERN CANAL BELT

**INFORMATION**

Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University.....(see 10)  
 Classic Boat Dinners.....1 A6  
 Euro Business Center.....2 B2  
 Koan Float.....3 B5  
 Main Post Office.....4 B4  
 Sauna Deco.....5 C3

**SIGHTS** (pp91-7)

Anne Frank Huis.....6 A3  
 Bartolotti House.....7 B4  
 Bijbels Museum.....8 B5  
 De Rode Hoed.....9 B3  
 Felix Meritis Building.....10 A5  
 Greenland Warehouses.....11 B2  
 Greenpeace Building.....12 B3  
 Homomonument.....13 B4  
 Huis Marseille.....14 B6  
 Huis Met de Hoofden.....15 B3  
 Keizersgracht 319.....16 B5  
 Multatuli Museum.....17 C2  
 Netherlands Media Art Institute.....18 A5  
 News Photo.....19 C2  
 Poezenboot.....20 C2  
 Theater Instituut Nederland.....21 B4  
 Van Brienenhofje.....22 B2  
 Westerkerk.....23 A4

**EATING** (pp163-6)

Buffet van Odette.....59 B5  
 Casa Perú.....60 A6  
 Christophe.....61 B3  
 Cilubang.....62 A5  
 De 2 Grieken.....63 B2  
 De Belhamel.....64 C2  
 De Struisvogel.....65 A5  
 Envy.....66 A4  
 Foodism.....67 B3  
 Goodies.....68 B5  
 Hein.....69 A5  
 Koh-I-Noor.....70 A4  
 Letting.....71 B3  
 Lof.....72 C2  
 Lust.....73 A5  
 Nielsen.....74 A5  
 Pancake Bakery.....75 B3  
 Stout.....76 C2  
 't Kuytje.....77 B4  
 Wil Graanstra Friteshuis.....78 A4

**DRINKING & SMOKING** (pp187-9)

Barney's.....79 C1  
 Brix.....80 B5  
 Café de Pels.....81 B5  
 Café de Vergulde Gaper.....82 B2  
 Café Het Molenaarpad.....83 A6  
 De Admiraal.....84 B5  
 De Doffer.....85 A5  
 De II Prinsen.....86 B2  
 Dulac.....87 B1  
 Dylan.....(see 99)  
 Felix Meritis Café.....(see 10)  
 't Arendsnest.....88 B3  
 Pompadour.....89 B5  
 Siberie.....90 C2  
 Snookerclub De Keizers.....91 A4  
 Brillmuseum.....92 B3  
 De Kaaskamer.....93 A5  
 De Witte Tanden Winkel.....94 A5  
 Episode.....95 A3  
 Exota.....96 B4  
 Fates.....97 B3  
 Frozen Fountain.....98 A6  
 Gamekeeper.....99 B4  
 Hester van Eeghen.....38 B4  
 Klein Antiek.....39 B4  
 Lady Day.....40 B4  
 Laura Dols.....41 B5  
 Local Service.....42 A5  
 Meeuwig & Zn.....43 C2  
 Mendoza.....44 A5  
 Miauw.....45 B4  
 Nic Nic.....46 B4  
 Nieuws.....47 A4  
 Puccini Bomboni.....48 B4  
 Santa Jet.....49 B2  
 Skins Cosmetics.....50 A5  
 Unlimited Delicious.....51 C1  
 Urban Picnic.....52 B5  
 Uri Duri.....53 B5  
 Van Ravenstein.....54 B5  
 Volksbond Shop.....55 C1  
 Wax Well Records.....56 B4  
 Zinne & Minne.....57 B5  
 Zipper.....58 B5

**SHOPPING** (pp145-8)

Amsterdam Watch Company 24 B4  
 Antonia by Yvette.....25 B4  
 Architectura & Natura.....26 B3  
 Architectuurantiquariat  
 Opbouw.....(see 26)  
 Be Innocent.....27 B5  
 Beadies.....28 B5  
 Boekie Woekie.....29 A5  
 Brillmuseum.....30 B4  
 De Kaaskamer.....31 A5  
 De Witte Tanden Winkel.....32 A5  
 Episode.....33 A5  
 Exota.....34 B4  
 Fates.....35 B3  
 Frozen Fountain.....36 A6  
 Gamekeeper.....37 B4  
 Hester van Eeghen.....38 B4  
 Klein Antiek.....39 B4  
 Lady Day.....40 B4  
 Laura Dols.....41 B5  
 Local Service.....42 A5  
 Meeuwig & Zn.....43 C2  
 Mendoza.....44 A5  
 Miauw.....45 B4  
 Nic Nic.....46 B4  
 Nieuws.....47 A4  
 Puccini Bomboni.....48 B4  
 Santa Jet.....49 B2  
 Skins Cosmetics.....50 A5  
 Unlimited Delicious.....51 C1  
 Urban Picnic.....52 B5  
 Uri Duri.....53 B5  
 Van Ravenstein.....54 B5  
 Volksbond Shop.....55 C1  
 Wax Well Records.....56 B4  
 Zinne & Minne.....57 B5  
 Zipper.....58 B5

**NEGEN STRAATJES**

Reestr.....91  
 Hartenstr.....92  
 Gasthuismolenstr.....93  
 Oude Spiegelstr.....94  
 Berenstr.....95  
 Wolveenstr.....96  
 Oude Spiegelstr.....97  
 Heringstr.....98  
 Beulingsstr.....99

**TRANSPORT**

Canal Bus Dock.....107 A4

**See Jordaan Map p86**

**See City Centre Map pp62-5**

# top picks

## WESTERN CANAL BELT

- **Anne Frank Huis (below)** Be moved by the story of Anne Frank – get there early or late to avoid the crowds.
- **Negen Straatjes (p91)** Even the shop-averse will be charmed by the quirky and diverse offerings of the myriad boutiques.
- **Step 1:** find yourself a seat at one of the many brown cafés lining the Prinsengracht. **Step 2:** relax.
- **Theater Instituut Nederland (p93)** If the play's your thing, don't miss this excellent, handsome Theater Museum.
- **Westerkerk (right)** Go on, legs of steel: climb the tower for a gorgeous view.

### ANNE FRANK HUIS Map p92

☎ 556 71 05; [www.annefrank.org](http://www.annefrank.org); Prinsengracht 276; adult/child under 10yr/child 10-17yr €7.50/free/3.50; ☎ 9am-9pm mid-Mar–mid-Sep, to 7pm mid-Sep–mid Mar, closed Yom Kippur  
 It is one of the 20th century's most compelling stories: a young Jewish girl forced into hiding with her family and their friends to escape deportation by the Nazis (see the boxed text, p94). The house they used as a hideaway should be a highlight of any visit to Amsterdam; indeed, it gets nearly a million visitors a year. The house itself is now contained within a modern, square shell.

It took the German army just five days to occupy all of the Netherlands, along with Belgium and much of France. Anne's famous diary describes how restrictions were gradually imposed on Dutch Jews: from being forbidden to ride streetcars to being forced to turn in their bicycles and not being allowed to visit Christian friends. These, of course, were only some of the mildest examples.

The focus of the museum is the *achterhuis* (rear house), also known as the **secret annexe**. It was in this dark and airless space that the Franks observed complete silence during the daytimes, outgrow their clothes, pasted photos of Hollywood stars on the walls and read Dickens, before being mysteriously betrayed and sent to their deaths.

The Anne Frank Huis does not accept the Amsterdam Pass or the Museumkaart, and

queues can be quite long at peak times. Come early or late in the day to avoid the crowds. To save time, buy your tickets online, print them out and use the separate entrance for advance ticket holders. Also note: there's no cloakroom, and no large rucksacks are permitted.

### WESTERKERK Map p92

Western Church; ☎ 624 77 66; [www.westerkerk.nl](http://www.westerkerk.nl); Westermarkt; church admission free, tower €6 by tour only; ☎ church 11am-3pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, tower 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, church services 10.30am Sun Apr-Sep

The main gathering place for Amsterdam's Dutch Reformed community, the church was built for rich Protestants to a 1620 design by Hendrick de Keyser. The nave is the largest in the Netherlands and covered by a wooden barrel vault.

The huge main **organ** dates from 1686, with panels decorated with instruments and biblical scenes. Rembrandt, who died bankrupt at nearby Rozengracht, was buried in a pauper's grave somewhere in the church.

Another highlight is the **bell tower**, topped by the blue imperial crown that Habsburg emperor Maximilian I bestowed to the city for its coat of arms in 1489. The climb of the 85m tower can be strenuous and claustrophobic (inside a tower, after all), but the guide takes breaks on the landings while describing the bells.

Carillon recitals take place on Tuesdays between noon and 1pm; best listening is from the nearby Bloemgracht. The bells also chime mechanically every 15 minutes.

### THEATER INSTITUUT NEDERLAND

Map p92

Theater Museum; ☎ 551 33 00; [www.tin.nl](http://www.tin.nl); Herengracht 168; adult/senior, student & child €4.50/2.25; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun

Theatre buffs will be in their element at the Theater Museum. Exhibits cover the history of Dutch theatre via dioramas (including the first theatre built in Amsterdam, in 1638); displays of costumes from lush to stark; heady sepia-toned early photographs of 19th-century actors; and video clips of famous modern-day productions. It's also a unique opportunity to learn about one of the most interesting legacies of the Dutch theatre: the *rederijkamers* (chambers of



## ANNE FRANK

Anne Frank's father, Otto, was a manufacturer of pectin (a gelling agent used in jam) who had the foresight to emigrate with his family from Frankfurt to Amsterdam in 1933. In December 1940 he bought what is now known as the Anne Frank Huis on the Prinsengracht and moved his business here from the Singel. By then the German occupiers had already tightened the noose around the city's Jewish inhabitants, and even though he signed the business over to his non-Jewish partner, Otto was forced to go into hiding in July 1942 with his family – his wife and daughters Anne (aged 13) and Margot (16).

They moved into the specially prepared rear of the building, along with another couple, the Van Daans, and their son Peter, and were joined later by a Mr van Dussel. The entrance hid behind a revolving bookcase, and the windows of the annexe were blacked out to prevent suspicion among people who might see it from surrounding houses (blackouts were common practice to disorient Allied bombers at night).

Here they survived until they were betrayed to the Gestapo in August 1944. The Franks were among the last Jews to be deported and Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in March 1945, only weeks before it was liberated. Otto was the only member of the family to survive, and after the war he published Anne's diary, which was found among the litter in the annexe (the furniture had been carted away by the Nazis). Addressed to the fictitious Kitty, the diary – written in Dutch – traces the young teenager's development through puberty and persecution, and displays all the signs of a gifted writer in the making.

In 1957 the then owner donated the house to the Anne Frank Foundation, which turned it into a museum on the persecution of Jews in WWII and the dangers of present-day racism and anti-Semitism.

The diary, meanwhile, has taken on a life of its own. It's been translated into some 60 languages and was made into a stage play performed in 34 countries, a 1959 Hollywood movie and a 2001 British movie. The diary has been reissued in recent years, complete with passages deleted by Otto about Anne's awakening sexuality and relationship problems with her mother, all of which only round out her character and remind us that she was, among other things, an ordinary girl, unable to swim against the tide of extraordinary times.

rhetoric), medieval literary societies that staged large-scale productions throughout the Netherlands and Flanders. Most signage is in English.

Even if you're not interested in theatre, the museum has a stunning interior, and spills over into the **Bartolotti House** (Herengracht 170-172), which has one of the most stunning facades in the city: a red-brick, Dutch Renaissance job that follows the bend of the canal. It was built in 1615 by Hendrick de Keyser and his son Pieter.

## NEWS PHOTO Map p92

☎ 330 84 00; [www.newsphoto.nl](http://www.newsphoto.nl); Haarlemmerstraat 24-26; admission free; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Mon

This shop-museum displays enormous blowups of photos that accompany headlines, by photographers from around the world. In fact the museum operates like something of a newsroom itself. Themed exhibitions (terrorism, the Tour de France etc) change every few weeks, but as news is made the curators use giant printers to print out the latest, and – presto – it's up on the conveniently magnetic walls. You can order fresh prints in a number of sizes, produced on the spot.

## FELIX MERITIS BUILDING Map p92

☎ 623 13 11; [www.felix.meritis.nl](http://www.felix.meritis.nl); Keizersgracht 324; 🕒 box office 9am-7pm

This centre for the performing arts was built in 1787 by Jacob Otten Husly for an organisation called Felix Meritis (Latin for 'Happy through Merit'), a society of wealthy residents who promoted the ideals of the Enlightenment through the study of science, arts and commerce. The colonnaded façade served as a model for that of the Concertgebouw, and its oval concert hall (where Brahms, Grieg and Saint Saëns performed) was copied as the Concertgebouw's Kleine Zaal (Small Hall) for chamber music.

Nowadays the reconstituted Felix Meritis Foundation promotes European performing arts and literature. On a sunny morning the café's huge windows make for comfy reading.

## NETHERLANDS MEDIA ART INSTITUTE Map p92

☎ 623 71 01; [www.montevideo.nl](http://www.montevideo.nl); Keizersgracht 264; adult/student €2.50/1.50; 🕒 gallery 1-6pm Tue-Sat & 1st Sun of month

From the hilarious and the ridiculous to the deep and the experimental, there's always something interesting in this gallery's

changing exhibits. Don't expect to see works by the hit-makers or TV directors of tomorrow, though. The institute is specifically about video as art; there's an artist-in-residence program if you get inspired. The collection numbers some 1500 works, assembled since the institute was established in 1978. The **mediatheek** (admission free; 🕒 1-5pm Mon-Fri) works like a library, complete with librarians to advise you.

## HOMOMONUMENT Map p92

### Cnr Keizersgracht & Radhuisstraat

Behind the Westerkerk, this 1987 cluster of three 10m x 10m x 10m granite triangles recall persecution by the Nazis, who forced gay men to wear a pink triangle patch. One of the triangles actually steps down into the Keizersgracht, and is said to represent a jetty from which gays were sent to the concentration camps. Others interpret the step-up from the canal as a rising symbol of hope.

Just south of the Homomonument is the **Pink Point** (🕒 noon-6pm Mar-Aug, limited hours rest of year). Part information kiosk, part souvenir shop, it's a good place to pick up gay and lesbian publications, and news about parties, events and social groups.

## HUIS MARSEILLE Map p92

☎ 531 89 89; [www.huismarseille.nl](http://www.huismarseille.nl); Keizersgracht 401; adult/child under 17yr/student €5/free/3; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Sun

This well-curated photography museum stages large-scale, temporary exhibitions, drawing from its own collection as well as hosting travelling shows. Themes might include portraiture, nature or regional photography, spread out over several floors and a 'summer house' behind the main house.

Huis Marseille also has a noteworthy building. The name refers to its original owner, a French merchant in 1665, and the original structure has remained largely intact. It retains some antique touches such as the 18th-century fountain in the library, and a painting of Apollo, Minerva and the muses in the garden room.

## MULTATULI MUSEUM Map p92

☎ 638 19 38; [www.multatuli-museum.nl](http://www.multatuli-museum.nl); Korsepoortsteeg 20; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue, noon-5pm Sat & Sun (closed Sat Jul & Aug)

Better known by the pen name Multatuli – Latin for 'I have suffered greatly' – novelist

Eduard Douwes Dekker was best known for *Max Havelaar* (1860), about corrupt colonialists in the Dutch East Indies. Dekker himself worked in colonial administration in Batavia (now Jakarta), and the book made him something of a social conscience for the Netherlands. This small but fascinating museum-home chronicles his life and works, and shows furniture and artefacts from his period in Indonesia.

## HUIS MET DE HOOFDEN Map p92

### House with the Heads; Keizersgracht 123

A shining example of Dutch Renaissance style, this whimsical structure has a beautiful step gable with six heads at door level representing the classical muses. Folklore has it that the heads depict burglars, decapitated in quick succession by a fearless maid as they tried to break in. The façade veritably drips with decorations – lion masks, obelisks and vases – as well as the famous heads (match 'em up): Apollo, Diana, Ceres, Bacchus, Minerva and Mars. The building now houses the Bureau Monumentenzorg, the city office of monument preservation.

## BIJBELS MUSEUM Map p92

Bible Museum; ☎ 624 24 36; [www.bijbelsmuseum.nl](http://www.bijbelsmuseum.nl); Herengracht 366-368; adult/child under 12yr/child 13-17yr €7.50/free/3.75; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11-5pm Sun

This place first gained notoriety thanks to a dedicated minister, Leendert Schouten, who built a scale model of the Jewish Tabernacle described in Exodus. Now on the museum's 3rd floor, the model is said to have attracted thousands of visitors even before it was completed in 1851. Another large exhibit examines the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem from Christian, Jewish and Muslim perspectives. A collection of Dutch Bibles includes a **Delft Bible** printed in 1477. On the ground floor you can sniff scents mentioned in the Good Book and stroll through a garden of biblical trees.

## POEZENBOOT Map p92

Cat Boat; ☎ 625 87 94; [www.poezenboot.nl](http://www.poezenboot.nl); Singel, opposite No 40; admission free (but donations encouraged); 🕒 1-3pm

This boat on the Singel is a must for cat-lovers...and hell for mouse-lovers. It was founded in 1966 by an eccentric woman who became legendary for looking after

several hundred stray cats at a time. The boat has since been taken over by a foundation and holds a mere few dozen kitties in proper pens, ready to be spayed, neutered, implanted with an identifying computer chip (as per Dutch law) and, hopefully, adopted out.

### VAN BRIENENHOFJE [Map p92](#)

Prinsengracht 89-133; open to the public; ☎ 6am-6pm

This charming courtyard was named in the late 18th century for Jan van Brienen, who bought the Star Brewery located here, one of 13 breweries in town at the time. (The place is still called *De Star hofje* by many.) It was turned into an almshouse for older residents, and although not dirt poor they had a clear division of labour: the women cleaned house for the single men, who in turn toted water buckets from the outside pump (topped by a curious lantern). There's also a manicured garden.

If *hofjes* grab you, be sure to visit the [Jordaan](#) (p85).

### DE RODE HOED [Map p92](#)

The Red Hat; ☎ 623 56 06; [www.rodehoed.nl](#); Keizersgracht 102; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm, except during special events

De Rode Hoed is a cultural centre that occupies three glorious 17th-century canal houses. Its line-up includes lectures by world-renowned authors and debates on the topics of the day, sometimes in English. It's worth a visit, even when nothing's on, to view the three-storey main auditorium, which was once the largest clandestine church in the Netherlands. De Rood Hoed – 'the Red Hat' – was named for the hat shop once located here (spot the tile on the façade that identified the place).

## VEDDY CIVILISED WESTERN CANALS

### Walking Tour

**1 The Dam** Much more than the birthplace of Amsterdam, today the [Dam](#) (p69) is dominated by the [Royal Palace](#) (p67), worth a visit for its grand interior and art collection. To the right, the impressive [Nieuwe Kerk](#) (p66) often stages excellent exhibitions, while [Madame Tussauds Amsterdam](#) (good for kids; p71) is to the left.

**2 Magna Plaza** Head west, and across Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal you'll see the massive shopping complex [Magna Plaza](#) (p72) – check out its atrium lobby and, if you like, dozens of shops.

**3 Torenluis** Continue west and then head north towards the [Torenluis](#), the bridge over our first canal, the Singel. If you're craving coffee and apple pie, [Villa Zeezicht](#) (p159) has some of the best in town. The bridge features a [statue](#) of the Dutch literary giant Multatuli; there's a [museum](#) (p95) dedicated to him a few blocks north.

**4 Brouwersgracht** The Singel soon intersects with the pretty [Brouwersgracht](#). Cross over Brouwersgracht and walk west to the head of the Herengracht, one of our favourite views in town, with boats passing in three directions.

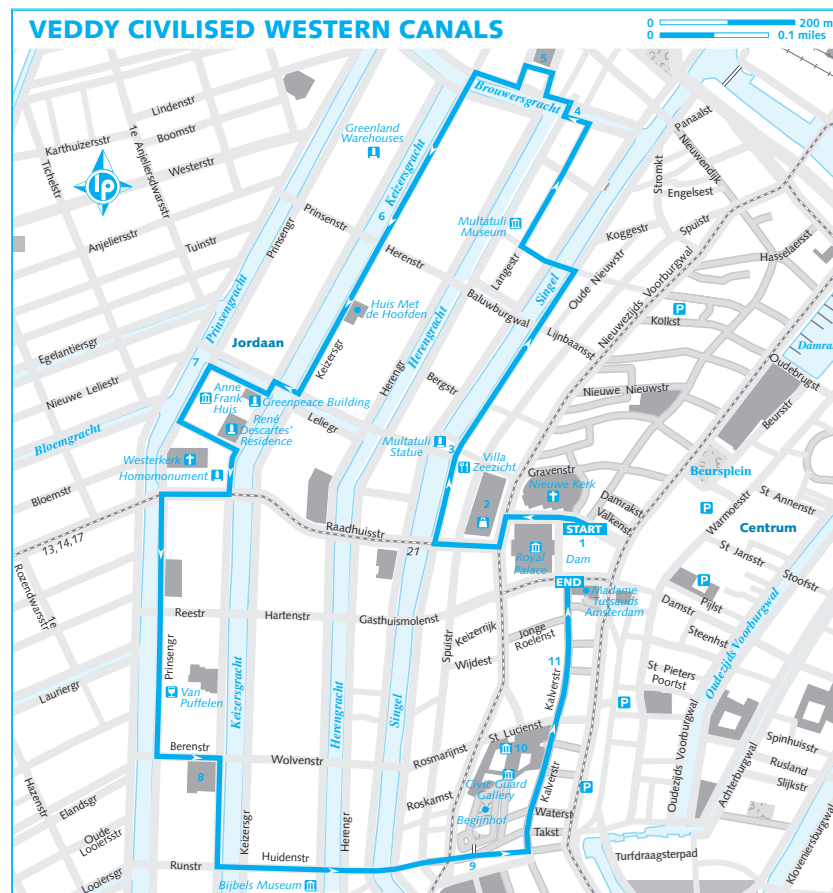
**5 Westindisch Huis** To the north is Herenmarkt, with the 17th-century [Westindisch Huis](#), the former head office of the Dutch West India Company. It was here that the booty of Admiral Piet Heyn, the great naval hero, was stored after his men captured the Spanish silver fleet off the coast of Cuba.

**6 Keizersgracht** Turning south, cross the Brouwersgracht into the [Keizersgracht](#). You'll soon spot the imposing [Greenland Warehouses](#) (p48) and, further on, the curious [Huis Met de Hoofden](#) (House with the Heads; p95), with carvings of Apollo, Ceres and Mars.

**7 Prinsengracht** At peaceful Leliegerecht, by the [Greenpeace Building](#) (p50), head to [Prinsengracht](#) to pass the [Anne Frank Huis](#) (p93) and the soaring tower of the [Westerkerk](#) (p93). Behind it is Karin Dann's quietly moving [Homomonument](#) (p95) and, at Westermarkt 6, the house where René Descartes stayed during his sojourn in Amsterdam. Further south on Prinsengracht is [Van Puffelen](#) (p188), an atmospheric brown café.

**8 Felix Meritis Building** Back on Keizersgracht, you can't miss the quirky [Felix Meritis Building](#) (p94), a one-time enlightenment society turned alternative theatre. After WWII this monumental, columned edifice served as the head office of the Dutch Communist Party – that is, until 1981, when the party's dramatic collapse prompted a move elsewhere.

**9 Spui** Cross the canals again and head east to the [Bijbels Museum](#) (p95), with its impressive models of biblical sites, en route to the [Spui](#) (p69) for a



### WALK FACTS

Start The Dam  
End Kalverstraat  
Distance 3.5km  
Duration 1¼ hours

coffee or beer or weekend book and art markets. The [Begijnhof](#) (p68) is just off the square.

**10 Amsterdams Historisch Museum** The [Amsterdams Historisch Museum](#) (p68) is just up the

alley, along with the group portraits that fill its [Civic Guard Gallery](#) (p68). A former orphans home, the museum is the best place to understand Amsterdam's peculiar evolution from obscure trading post to Golden Age arts hub and now the service-oriented metropolis it is today.

**11 Kalverstraat** The busy shopping street [Kalverstraat](#) (p73) leads you back to the Dam. For a short course on Dutch football legends, seek out the hallowed halls of [Het Oranje Voetbal Museum](#) (p73).

## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

Drinking & Smoking p189; Eating p166; Shopping p148; Sleeping p217

If the Western Canal Belt is upscale and refined, the Southern Canal Belt is more diverse and populist, though no less stately. The Southern Canal Belt spans the area from the radial Leidsegracht in the west to the Amstel in the east, anchored by two key nightlife districts: Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein. In between are the elegant antique and art shops of the Spiegel Quarter, the gay nightlife hub on the Reguliersdwarstraat, and the Golden Bend (p103), a stretch along the Herengracht that makes some Western Canal Belt houses look like servants' quarters.

The canal project, which began with the Western Canal Belt, stopped at the Leidsegracht in 1625 because of lack of funds, but it was picked up again at a later date. Even then, work on the southern section progressed much more slowly; it took 12 years to construct the western canals, but to extend the Canal Belt all the way to the Amstel took another 40. The Canal Belt was to have continued across the Amstel to the eastern IJ, but the only one ever completed was the Nieuwe Herengracht.

A very short walk west of the Amstel, Rembrandtplein (p104) is a hub of café culture and nightlife of any stripe. You won't have any trouble finding a café or a restaurant on Rembrandtplein or on neighbouring Thorbeckeplein. Many are large and spill onto the sidewalks, but our favourite is the more intimate Café Schiller (p191), an Art Deco marvel that's popular with the pre-theatre crowd. De Heeren van Aemstel (p198) is a fun place to kick back a beer or to catch a performance. Utrechtsestraat, off the southeast corner of Rembrandtplein, is the city's best row of restaurants.

For the gay scene head north on Halvemaansteeg and to the Amstel for a cluster of bars and cafés, or a block west across Vijzelstraat to the always busy Reguliersdwarstraat; the friendly lesbian café Vivelavie (p206) is just east of Rembrandtplein.

The street running west from Rembrandtplein is Reguliersbreestraat. Before the construction of the Canal Belt, the monks of the Regulier (Regular) order had a monastery outside the city walls roughly where Utrechtsestraat now crosses Keizersgracht, which explains the frequent use of the name in this area. Reguliersbreestraat is pretty busy, but on the southern side of the street you can see the Tuschinski theater (p200), opened in 1921 and still the most glorious cinema in the country. The building's blend of Art Deco and Amsterdam School architecture, with its recently refurbished interior, is a visual feast. Inquire about tours.

Southwest of Rembrandtplein, Thorbeckeplein is named after Jan Rudolf Thorbecke, the Liberal politician who created the Dutch parliamentary system in 1848. His statue faces outwards from the square, although he might have enjoyed its leafy car-free atmosphere. There are a number of cafés and clubs on both sides of the square, plus a weekly art market (📅 10.30am-6pm Sun Mar-Oct), which offers mostly modern pictorial work.

A small statue by the Amstelkerk (p104) commemorates Professor Kokadorus, aka Meijer Linnewiel (1867-1934), the most colourful market vendor Amsterdam has known. People would buy anything from spoons to suspenders ('to hang up your mother-in-law') just to watch his performances interlaced with satirical comments about politics. Amsterdam has a long tradition in creative vending, and if you understand Dutch, you can pick up some great lines in the markets of the Jordaan.

The square around the Amstelkerk was kept free of construction, as another church was to have been built there. The funds never materialized, and the square called Amstelveld remains open and pleasant. A Monday market has been operating here since 1876, even before the one on Thorbeckeplein. This lively 'free market' had vendors from out of town peddling a wide range of goods, and it still operates as a garden market (📅 3-6pm Mar-Dec) in the summer months, focusing on plants and flowers. An antiques and collectibles market (📅 9am-6pm) has started on the last Friday of the month in warmer months. In summer the Amstelveld is a pleasant space where children play soccer, dogs run around, and patrons laze in the sun at the café Janvier (p191) against the south side of the Amstelkerk.

Even if you have neither the inclination nor the money to buy art, luxury antiques or collectables, it is well worth taking a look at Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (which begins at the Herengracht) and its pretty extension the Spiegelgracht (which ends across from the Rijksmuseum). Many of the shops and galleries here in the Spiegel Quarter feel like museums in their own right.

## top picks

### SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

- **Metz Department Store (p106)** Get a bird's-eye view of Amsterdam's canals from the café.
- **Museum Van Loon (right)** See up close what it meant to be wealthy in the Golden Age.
- **Leidseplein (below)** Join the throngs of visitors in Amsterdam's own neon-lit version of Times Sq.
- **FOAM (right)** See cutting-edge photography from some of the world's greatest shooters.
- **Café Schiller (p191)** Cap your eventful day with a beer or dinner in these Art Deco chambers on Rembrandtplein.

### LEIDSEPLEIN Map pp100-1

A one-stop shop for party-goers, this hyperactive square is a major tram intersection and a litmus test for nightlife at any given time. On its eastern side stood the Leidsepoort (Leiden Gate), demolished in 1870, where farmers would leave their horses and carts before entering town. The strip of greenery with large chestnut trees on the other side of the Singelgracht is sweetly called 'Leidsebosje' (Leiden Wood).

There's something here for everyone. The sidewalk cafés at the northern end of the square are perfect for watching street artists and eccentric passers-by. There are countless pubs, clubs and a smorgasbord of restaurants. Entertainment venues radiate from its centre, and nearby Kerkstraat has some trendy gay establishments.

### BLOEMENMARKT Map pp100-1

**Flower Market; Singel;** 📅 9am-5pm, closed Sun in winter

Amsterdam's famous flower market is located at the spot where nurserymen, having sailed up the Amstel from their smallholdings, would moor their barges for direct selling to customers. The market here dates from the 1860s, no longer floating but perched on piles. It's a colourful sight and the place is packed with tourists (and pickpockets). Prices are steep by Amsterdam standards but the quality is good. Just make sure that your home country allows you to import bulbs (bulbs destined for the USA are marked with a special label).

### FOAM (FOTOGRAFIE MUSEUM AMSTERDAM) Map pp100-1

☎ 551 65 00; www.foam.nl; Keizersgracht 609; adult/child under 12yr/student & senior €7/free/5; 📅 10am-6pm Sat-Wed, to 9pm Thu & Fri  
Simple, functional but roomy galleries, some with skylights or grand windows for natural light, make this museum an excellent space for all genres of photography. Two storeys of exhibition space create a great setting for admiring the changing exhibits from photographers of world renown, including Sir Cecil Beaton, Annie Leibovitz and Henri Cartier-Bresson, just to name a few. In case you become enthused after your visit, it also publishes the FOAM magazine.

### AMSTERDAM AMERICAN HOTEL

Map pp100-1

☎ 556 30 00; www.amsterdamamerican.com; Leidsekade 97

The only reason this gorgeous hotel (see p217) got its Yankee-Doodle label is because the architect, CAA Steineweg, studied hotel design in the United States. Steineweg made sure that the style (mostly Viennese Renaissance actually) was adorned with abundant Americana – life-sized Indian chiefs and their squaws as well as a 4m heraldic eagle over the entrance. That building was demolished in 1900, but the magnificent structure you see today is broadly similar, if less bombastic. The brilliant **Café Americain (p190)** in Art Deco style was added in 1927, and still looks much like it did then.

### DE APPEL Map pp100-1

☎ 625 56 51; www.deappel.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 10; admission €4; 📅 11am-6pm Tue-Sun during exhibitions

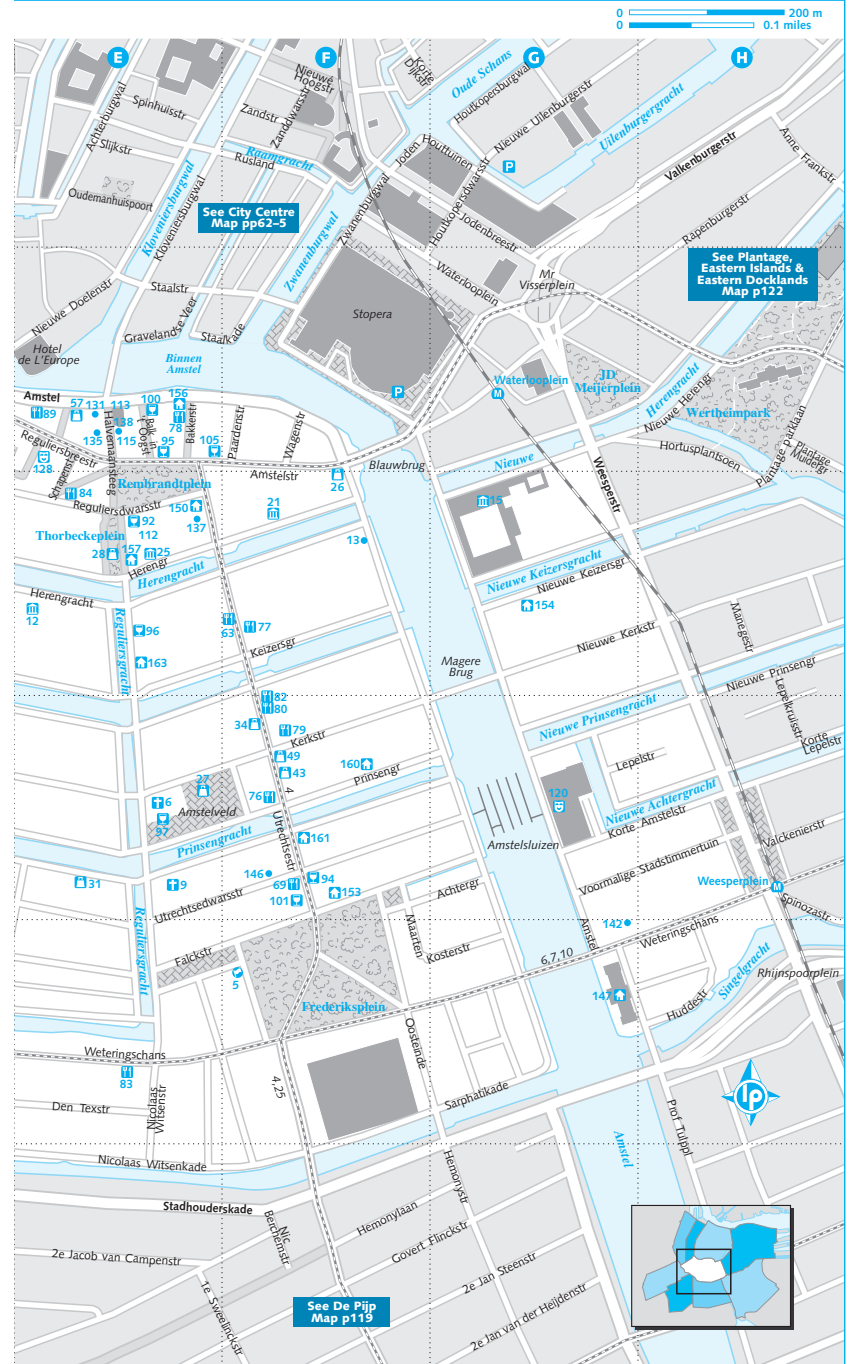
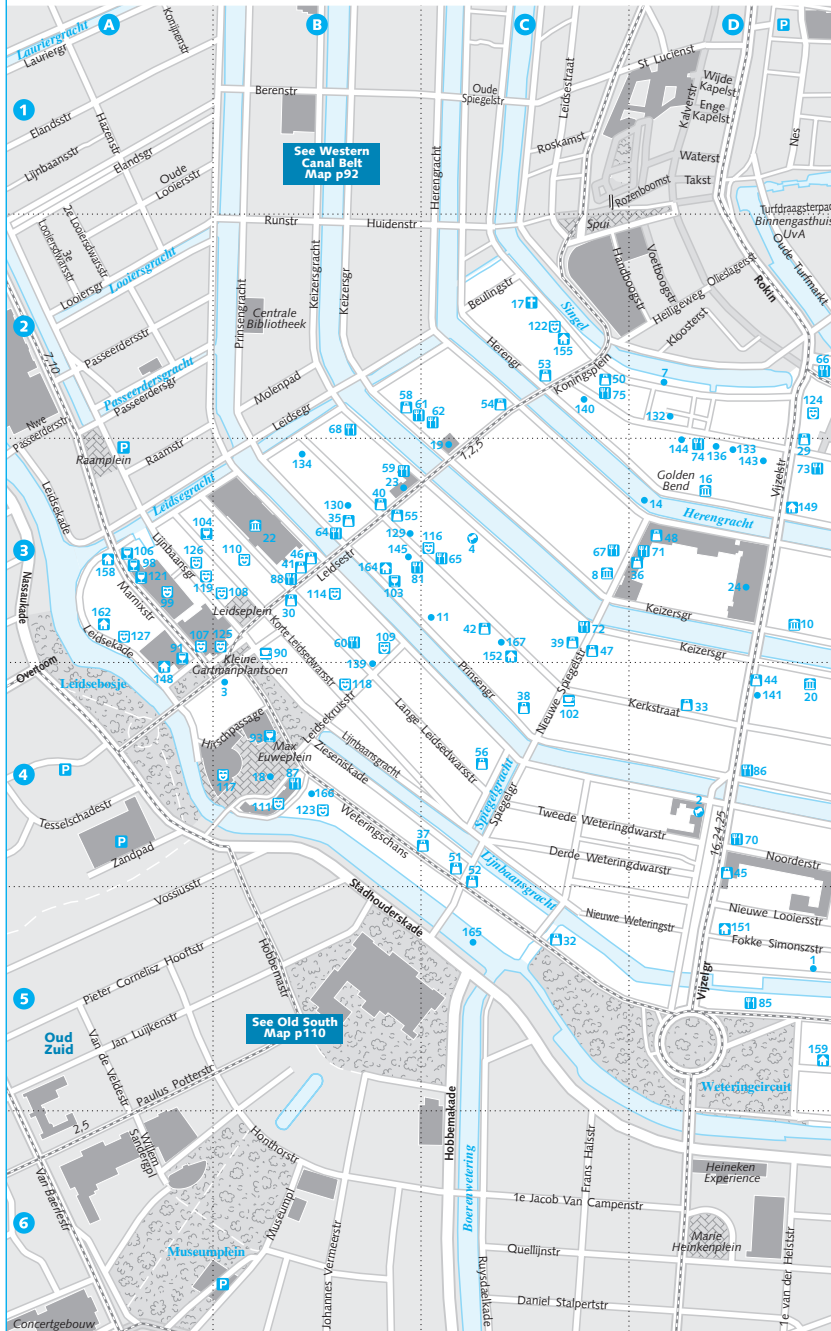
Despite its location in the antiques street of the Spiegel Quarter, this contemporary arts foundation is anything but old-fashioned. Rather, it's a large art and media space with ever-changing exhibits of contemporary works: installation pieces, painting, sculpture and multimedia. Themes vary, but the aim is always to present something not otherwise readily available to the Dutch public. Phone or check the website to find out what's on.

### MUSEUM VAN LOON Map pp100-1

☎ 624 52 55; www.museumvanloon.nl; Keizersgracht 672; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-18yr €6/free/4; 📅 11am-5pm Wed-Mon  
Our favourite house-museum in town, this opulent residence was built in 1672 for a



# SOUTHERN CANAL BELT



## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

## INFORMATION

Barry's Health Centre.....	1	D5
French Consulate.....	2	D4
GVWK Traveler.....	3	B4
Mike's Bike Tours.....	(see 167)	
Norwegian Consulate.....	4	C3
Spanish Consulate.....	5	F5

## SIGHTS (pp98-108)

Amstelkerk.....	6	E4
Amsterdam American Hotel..	(see 148)	
Bloemenmarkt.....	7	D2
De Appel.....	8	C3
De Duij.....	9	E4
FOAM.....	10	D3
Former Milk Factory.....	11	C3
Geelvinck Hinlopen Huis.....	12	E3
Cijsbert Dommer Huis.....	13	F3
Golden Bend.....	14	D3
Hermitage Amsterdam.....	15	G3
Kattenkabinet.....	16	D3
Koninklijk Theater Carré.....	(see 120)	
Krijtberg.....	17	C2
Max Euwe Centrum.....	18	B4
Metz Department Store.....	19	C3
Museum Van Loon.....	20	D4
Museum Willet-Holthuysen..	21	F3
Paleis van Justitie.....	22	B3
PC Hooft Store.....	23	B3
Stadsarchief.....	24	D3
Stadsschouwburg.....	(see 125)	
Tassenmuseum Hendrikje.....	25	E3

## SHOPPING (pp148-51)

Amstell Diamonds.....	26	F2
Antiques Market.....	27	E4
Aurora Kontakt.....	29	D3
Australian Homemade.....	30	B3
BeBob Design.....	31	E4
Bloemenmarkt.....	(see 7)	
Carl Denig.....	32	C5
Cityboek.....	33	D4
Concerto.....	34	F4
Cora Kemperman.....	35	B3
Decorativa.....	36	D3
Deshima.....	37	B4
Eduard Kramer.....	38	C4
EH Ariëns Kappers.....	39	C3
Eichholtz.....	40	B3
Etos.....	41	B3
Galerie Lambiek.....	42	C3
Get Records.....	43	F4
Hana Zuki.....	44	D4
Hart's Wijnhandel.....	45	D4
Heinen Delftware.....	46	B3
International Theatre & Film Books.....	(see 125)	
Jaski.....	47	C3
Lieve Hemel.....	48	D3
Look Out.....	49	F4
Marañon Hangmatten.....	50	C2
Plant Market.....	(see 27)	
Reflex Modern Art Gallery.....	51	C4
Reflex New Art Gallery.....	52	C4
Selexyz Scheltema.....	53	C2
Shoebaloo.....	54	C2
Spoiled.....	55	B3

## EATING

Bagels & Beans.....	59	B3
Bojo.....	60	B3
Broodje van Kootje.....	(see 108)	
Café Morlang.....	61	C2
Café Walem.....	62	C2
Gala.....	(see 74)	
Herrie.....	63	F3
La Rive.....	(see 147)	
Loekie.....	64	B3
Los Pilones.....	65	C3
M Café.....	(see 19)	
Maoz Falafel.....	66	D2
Pasta e Basta.....	67	C3
Pastini.....	68	B2
Pata Negra.....	69	F4
Piet de Leeuw.....	70	D4
Pygma-lion.....	71	D3
Restaurant Red.....	72	C3
Ristorante D'Antica.....	73	D3
Rose's Cantina.....	74	D3
Saturnino.....	75	C2
Segugio.....	76	F4
Sluizer.....	77	F3
Szmulewicz.....	78	E2
Take Thai.....	79	F4
Tempo Doeloe.....	80	F4
Thai Corner.....	81	B3
Tujuh Maret.....	82	F4
Uliveto.....	83	E5
Van Dobben.....	84	E3
Van Vlaanderen.....	85	D5
Village Bagels.....	86	D4
Wagamama.....	87	B4
Wok to Walk.....	88	B3
Zushi.....	89	E2

## GAY &amp; LESBIAN

Aero Hotel.....	129	B3
Amistad Hotel.....	130	B3
Amstel Taverne.....	131	E2
April.....	132	D2
Arc.....	133	D3
De Spijker.....	134	B3
Entre Nous.....	135	E2
Exit.....	136	D3
Lellebel.....	137	E3
Montmartre.....	138	E2
Orfeo Hotel.....	139	B4
Other Side.....	140	C2
Sappho.....	141	D4
Schorer Foundation.....	142	G5
Shirt Shop.....	143	D3
Soho.....	144	D3
Thermos Night Sauna.....	145	B3
Twins Backstage.....	146	F4

## DRINKING &amp; SMOKING

Amstell Bar & Brasserie.....	(see 147)	
Bulldog.....	90	B3
Café Américain.....	91	A3
Café Schiller.....	92	E3
De Balie.....	93	B4
De Huyshkaemer.....	94	F4
De Kroon.....	95	E2
De Smoeshaan.....	(see 127)	
Herberg Hooghoudt.....	96	E3
Janvier.....	97	E4
Kamer 401.....	98	A3
Lux.....	99	A3
Mulligans.....	100	E2
Oosterling.....	101	F4
Pompadour.....	102	C4
Snookerclub Final Touch.....	103	B3
Suzy Wong.....	104	A3
Vivelaive.....	105	E2
Weber.....	106	A3

## NIGHTLIFE &amp; ARTS

AUB Ticketshop.....	107	A3
Boom Chicago.....	108	B3
Bourbon Street Jazz & Blues Club.....	109	B3

Brasil Music Bar.....	110	B3
Comedy Café Amsterdam.....	111	B4
De Balie.....	(see 93)	
De Heeren van Aemstel.....	112	E3
De Kleine Komedie.....	113	E2
De Uitkijk.....	114	B3
Escape.....	115	E2
Global Chillage.....	116	C3
Holland Casino.....	117	B4
Jazz Café Alto.....	118	B4
Jimmy Woo.....	119	A3
Koninklijk Theater Carré.....	120	G4
Melkweg.....	121	A3
Odeon.....	122	C2
Paradiso.....	123	B4
Pathé de Munt.....	124	D2
Stadsschouwburg.....	125	B3
Sugar Factory.....	126	A3
Theater Bellevue.....	127	A3
Tuschinski theater.....	128	E2

## SLEEPING

Amstel Intercontinental Hotel.....	147	G5
Amsterdam American Hotel.....	148	A4
Banks Mansion.....	149	D3
City Hotel.....	150	E3
Euphemia Hotel.....	151	D5
Hans Brinker Budget Hotel.....	152	C3
Hemp Hotel.....	153	F4
Hotel Adolesce.....	154	G3
Hotel Agora.....	155	C2
Hotel Amstelzicht.....	156	E2
Hotel de Admiraal.....	157	E3
Hotel Freeland.....	158	A3
Hotel Kap.....	159	D5
Hotel Orlando.....	160	F4
Hotel Prinsenhof.....	161	F4
Quentin Hotel.....	162	A3
Seven Bridges.....	163	E3
Seven One Seven.....	164	B3

## TRANSPORT

Blue Boat Company.....	(see 165)	
Canal Bus Dock.....	165	C5
MacBike.....	166	B4
Mike's Bike Tours.....	167	C3

rich arms dealer. In the late 1800s it was acquired by the Van Loons, one of the most prominent patrician families (thanks to the herring trade and the United East India Company, of which the original Mr Van Loon was a founder). Inside there are important paintings such as *Wedding Portrait* by Jan Miense Molenaer and a collection of some 150 portraits of the Van Loon family. But the main exhibit is the house itself, quiet, calm, and exuding the security of old money.

## TASSENMUSEUM HENDRIKJE

Map pp100-1

Museum of Bags & Purses; ☎ 524 64 52; www.tassenmuseum.nl; Herengracht 573; adult/child under 12yr/student & senior €6.50/free/5; 🕒 10am-5pm

The next time you refer to 'that old bag', think again: we're talking half a millennium's worth of arm candy here, the largest collection of handbags in the Western world. You'll find everything from a crumpled 16th-century pouch to dainty Art Deco and design classics by Chanel, Gucci and Versace, as well as Madonna's tasteful ivy-strewn 'Evita' bag from the film premiere. Even if you don't see the '80s touch-tone phone bag, the 17th-century interiors alone are worth the entrance price.

## MUSEUM WILLET-HOLTHUYSEN

Map pp100-1

☎ 523 18 22; www.willetholthuysen.nl; Herengracht 605; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-18yr €5/free/2.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

This sumptuous residence, now part of the Amsterdam's Historisch Museum, is named after the widow who bequeathed the property to the city in the late 19th century. Highlights include paintings by Jacob de Wit, the *place de milieu* (centrepiece) that was part of the family's 275-piece Meissen table service, and the intimate French-style garden with sundial – you can also peek at the Amstelstraat end. Be sure to borrow the notebook from the front desk, with details that make the house come alive (how meat was roasted and windows were cleaned).

## GOLDEN BEND Map pp100-1

Gouden Bocht; Herengracht btwn Leidsestraat & Vijzelstraat

The Golden Bend is about the most prestigious stretch of real estate in Amsterdam, a monument to the Golden Age, when

## top picks

## IT'S FREE

It's possible to spend a fortune in Amsterdam, but many enjoyable sights and activities cost nothing.

- **Red Light District** (p74) Keep your eyes on the architecture and you needn't spend a cent.
- **Civic Guard Gallery** (p68) Stroll through this monumental gallery of city defenders by the Amsterdam's Historisch Museum.
- **Southern Canal Belt** (p98) Get lost amid the gabled beauty.
- **Concertgebouw** (p199) and **Muziekgebouw** (p200) Treat yourself to great musicians playing great numbers gratis, with near-perfect acoustics.
- **Stopera** (p79) Attend a free recital by renowned, and probably edgy, talent in the Muziektheater.
- **Vondelpark** (p115) Take a bike ride through this lovely historic park
- **Eastern Docklands** (p126) Admire the cutting-edge architecture on a relaxing bike ride.

precious goods swelled in cellars of homes already stuffed with valuables (see the boxed text, p27). The earliest mansions date from the 1660s, when the Canal Belt was expanded south. Thanks to some lobbying at city hall, the gables here were twice as wide as the standard Amsterdam model, and the rear gardens were deeper. The richest Amsterdamers lived, loved and ruled their affairs from here. Apart from the museum **Kattenkabinet** (below), the homes are opened to the public only on Open Monument Day (see p19).

## KATTENKABINET Map pp100-1

Cats in Cabinet; ☎ 626 53 78; Herengracht 497; adult/child under 3yr/child 4-16yr €5/free/2.50; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun

One Golden Bend house that's open to the public is this offbeat museum, devoted, of all things, to the feline presence in art. It was founded by a wealthy financier, John Pierpont Morgan III, in memory of his red tomcat. The collection includes works largely from Dutch and French artists (Theophile-Alexandre Steinlen, 1859–1923, figures prominently) as well as a small Rembrandt (a Madonna and Child with cat and snake) and Picasso's *Le Chat*. There's also a nice selection of 19th-century magazine covers and circus posters.



## THE WINNER BY A NARROW MARGIN

Canal-boat commentators like to point out the narrowest house in Amsterdam, explaining that property was taxed on frontage – the narrower the house the lower the tax, regardless of height. But each guide seems to have a different ‘narrowest’ house. So which is it?

The house at Oude Hoogstraat 22, east of the Dam, is 2.02m wide and 6m deep. Occupying a mere 12 sq metres, it could well be the least space-consuming self-contained house in Europe. The house at Singel 7 appears narrower still, just a door and a slim 1st-floor window, but canal-boat commentators fail to point out that it’s actually the rear entrance of a house of normal proportions. On the other side of Singel, at No 144, is a house that measures only 1.8m across the front, though it widens to 5m at the rear.

### GEELVINCK HINLOPEN HUIS Map pp100-1

☎ 639 07 47; [www.geelvinckhinlopenhuis.nl](http://www.geelvinckhinlopenhuis.nl); Herengracht 518; adult/child under 6yr/student €4/free/3; 🕒 11am-5pm Sun

East of the mayor’s residence at No 502 stands this 17th-century house with stylish rooms, a formal garden and art in the carriage house. Though not quite as impressive as Museum Van Loon or Museum Willet-Holthuysen, it’s more serene, and definitely worth a look, especially if you can organise a private tour for your group on a weekday. Note: the entrance to the museum is around the back at Keizersgracht 633.

### REMBRANDTPLEIN Map pp100-1

Originally called Reguliersplein and then Botermarkt, after the butter markets held here until the mid-19th century, this square takes its name from the statue of the painter erected in 1876. He’s gazing pensively towards the Jewish quarter where he lived until circumstances forced him to the Jordaan.

Rembrandtplein soon evolved into a nightlife hub as various cafés, restaurants and clubs opened their doors. It’s almost genteel during the day, though often heaving with visitors. On the north side of the square, *De Kroon* (p190), one of the grandest cafés in town, is from 1898. Opposite, *Café Schiller* (p191), from 1892, is renowned for its fabulous Art Deco interior, including lead-tinted glass windows.

### GIJSBERT DOMMER HUIS Map pp100-1

Amstel 216  
Look closely, ladies and gentlemen, at the façade of this sober residence known locally as the ‘House with the Blood Stains’. As he lost his marbles, six-time mayor and diplomat Coenraad van Beuningen scribbled graffiti here in his own blood, and his unfathomable message –

including Hebrew letters and obscure cabal symbols – from the 17th century is still faintly visible. Well-to-do businessman Gijsbert Dommer commissioned this house from 1671, but the mad mayor is better known today.

### BLAUWBRUG Map pp100-1

**Blue Bridge, btwn Waterlooplein & Amstel street**  
Built in 1884, one of the city’s most striking bridges replaced an old wooden version that connected these shores of the Amstel since the 17th century. Inspired by the Alexander III bridge in Paris, it features tall, ornate street lamps topped by the imperial crown of Amsterdam, fish sculptures and foundations shaped like the prows of a medieval ship.

### REGULIERSGRACHT Map pp100-1

This peaceful canal was dug in 1658 to link the Herengracht with the canals further south. It was named after an order of monks whose monastery was located nearby. It rates right up there with Amsterdam’s prettiest canals, and through a quirk of construction you can peer through the arches of at least seven bridges, a fact not lost on canal-boat operators. A number of houses along here have intriguing gables, tablets and fancy decorations (see p107).

### AMSTELKERK Map pp100-1

☎ 520 00 70; Amstelveld 10; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm

The unique, pinewood Amstelkerk was erected in 1668 as a *noodkerk* (makeshift church) under the direction of the city architect, Daniël Stalpaert. The idea was that the congregation would have somewhere to meet while a permanent church arose next to it. Plans for a stone church were abandoned in the 1840s, and the Amstelkerk’s square interior was updated with neo-Gothic alterations, including a pipe

organ. The building now houses the offices of a local city restoration group, and is a popular concert venue. The seats under the shady plane trees at the adjacent bar-restaurant *Janvier* (p191) are a wonderful place to nurse a drink.

### DE DUIF Map pp100-1

The Dove; ☎ 520 00 70; Prinsengracht 756; 🕒 services 10am Sun

In 1796, shortly after the French-installed government proclaimed freedom of religion, De Duif was the first Catholic church to be built with a public entrance for over two centuries. These days De Duif is no longer Catholic but Ecumenical, and it’s

## top picks

### FOR CHILDREN

- **Vondelpark** (p115) A hot favourite with the small fry, this park near the old centre is replete with leafy picnic spots, playgrounds and duck ponds.
- **Kinderkookkafé** (p171) Put the kids to work on their own gourmet creations, and take a load off.
- **Amsterdamse Bos** (p131) A huge recreational area with a forestry museum, a petting zoo and energy-burning meadows.
- **Tram Museum Amsterdam** (p131) Take a historic tram complete with clanging bells from the Vondelpark to the Amsterdamse Bos.
- **NEMO science and technology centre** (p69) A tailor-made, hands-on science fun fair useful for answering all those How and Why questions.
- **Tropenmuseum** (p128) The children’s section devoted to exotic locations is a hit in any language.
- **Joods Historisch Museum** (p79) The kids’ section on Jewish life in Amsterdam is accessible and fun.
- **Artis Zoo** (p121) The extrovert monkeys, shimmying fish and the planetarium will keep those young eyes shining for hours
- **Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum** (p124) The old masted ship is staffed with costumed hosts who always put on a grand show.
- **Civic Guard Gallery** (p68) A bite-sized gallery of giant paintings guaranteed to awe the young ‘uns.
- **Canal bike** (p252) Take a unique pedal-powered ride through the city’s beautiful canals.
- **TunFun** (p80) Set ‘em loose for a romp in this underground all-round pleasure centre.
- **Koninginnedag** (Queen’s Day; p17) Kids of all ages revel in the madness of 30 April, the country’s biggest party.

also a venue for concerts, opera and private events. If you’re able to peek inside, check out the clay friezes of the Stations of the Cross on the right-hand wall. The pulpit carvings are of St Willebrordus of Utrecht, and the organ is a sight in its own right, reaching clear to the vaulted ceiling.

### MAGERE BRUG Map pp100-1

**Skinny Bridge; Amstel river, btwn Kerkstraat & Nieuwe Kerkstraat**

This undeniably picturesque bridge is the site of many a Dutch wedding photo. Dating from the 1670s, the nine-arched structure has been rebuilt several times, in both concrete and timber. It’s still operated by hand and remains photogenic even at night, when 1200 tiny lights make the bridge look like a Christmas confection. You can spot it in many films, including the James Bond thriller *Diamonds are Forever*. Stand in the middle and feel it sway under the passing traffic.

### AMSTELSLUIZEN Map pp100-1

**Amstel Locks; Amstel river, nr Theater Koninklijk Carré**

These impressive sluices, or locks, date from 1674 and allowed the canals to be flushed with fresh water from lakes north of the city, rather than salt water from the IJ, an innovation that made the city more livable. They were still operated by hand until recently. Four times a week in summer, and twice a week in winter, the locks are shut while fresh water flows in. The sluices on the west side of the city are left open as the stagnant water is pumped out to sea.

### KONINKLIJK THEATER CARRÉ

Map pp100-1

☎ 524 94 52; [www.theatercarre.nl](http://www.theatercarre.nl); Amstel 115-125; 🕒 box office 4-8pm

This esteemed theatre was built in 1887 by the Carré family, who had started their career years earlier with a horse act at the annual fair. The first structure was of wood, and eventually rebuilt in concrete because of the fire hazard, as early performances for 2000 spectators were lit by gas lamps. The classical façade is richly decorated with faces of jesters, dancers and theatre folk. Today the Carré books high-calibre musicals, theatre and dance events, and its Christmas circus is regarded as a seasonal highlight.



## PALEIS VAN JUSTITIE Map pp100-1

Court of Appeal; ☎ 541 21 11; Prinsengracht 436; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri

This authoritative pile began life in 1666 as an orphanage designed for 800 occupants, but by the early 19th century more than half the city's 4300 orphans were crammed in here. A royal decree finally relocated them to other towns, amid cries that children were being stolen. The building's current scowl, in sober neoclassical, is from an 1829 renovation after the orphanage was closed. You can wander inside, but as a rule you won't get beyond reception unless you have, er, official business. At the time of writing the court was due move into a fancy new office in Westerdokeiland (see p52) in 2010.

## STADSARCHIEF Map pp100-1

Municipal Archives; ☎ 251 15 11; <http://stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl>; Vijzelstraat 32; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sun In 2007 the Amsterdam city archives moved into the historic ABN-Amro building, a monumental structure from 1923 that was long the bank's head office. Anyone interested in the history of their family or the city can peruse the documents free of charge, and occasionally there are some interesting exhibitions. There's a large library with books about Amsterdam in different languages on everything from housing to legal briefs and sports clubs, as well as a café.

## KRIJTBURG Map pp100-1

☎ 623 19 23; [www.krijtberg.nl](http://www.krijtberg.nl); Singel 446; ☎ 12.30-5pm Tue, Wed, Thu & Sun

The soaring turrets of this neo-Gothic church are an odd sight in this row of sedate Singel homes. Officially known as the St Franciscus Xaveriuskerk, it replaced a clandestine Jesuit chapel on the same site; these days it's still Jesuit. The lavish paintings and statuary make this one of the most beautiful church interiors in the city.

Krijtberg's name means 'chalk mountain', referring to a house that once stood here and belonged to a chalk merchant.

## MAX EUWE CENTRUM Map pp100-1

☎ 625 70 17; [www.maxeuwe.nl](http://www.maxeuwe.nl); Max Euweplein 30a-1; admission free; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Fri & 1st Sat of month, limited hours Jul & Aug

Max Euwe (1901-81) was the Netherlands' only world chess champion, in the 1930s, and here you'll find a permanent exhibition devoted to the history of the game. You can

play against live or digital opponents. The pavement of the square out front is often crowded with players and onlookers bent over the outsized chess board.

## METZ DEPARTMENT STORE Map pp100-1

☎ 520 70 36; cnr Keizersgracht & Leidsestraat This building opened in 1891 to house the New York Life Insurance Company (hence the eagles inside and out), but soon passed to Metz, a purveyor of luxury furnishings which still owns it today. The functionalist designer and architect Gerrit Rietveld added the gallery on the top floor where you can have lunch or (literally) high tea.

## STADSSCHOUWBURG Map pp100-1

City Theatre; ☎ 624 23 11; [www.stadsschouwburgamsterdam.nl](http://www.stadsschouwburgamsterdam.nl); Leidseplein 26; ☎ advance ticket sales 10am-6pm Mon-Sat

In 1894, when this theatre with the grand balcony arcade was completed, public criticism was so fierce that funds for the exterior decorations never materialised. The architect, Jan Springer, couldn't handle this and promptly retired. The theatre is used for large-scale plays, operettas and festivals such as Julidans (p18).

## UTRECHTSESTRAAT Map pp100-1

This popular artery stocked with enticing shops, designer bars and cosy eateries seems a world away from the gaudy lights of Rembrandtplein, a stone's throw to the north. Lack of space becomes a charm as the trams, confined to a single line apart from passing points on the bridges, play a game of stop and go as passers-by marvel at the choreography of it all. The southern end of street used to terminate at the Utrechtse Poort, a gate to the nearby city of Utrecht, hence the name.

## HERMITAGE AMSTERDAM Map pp100-1

☎ 530 87 51; Nieuwe Herengracht 14; [www.hermitage.nl](http://www.hermitage.nl); adult/child under 16yr €/free; ☎ 10am-5pm

The long-standing ties of Russia and Holland – remember Czar Peter learned shipbuilding and Dutch cursing here – led to an Amsterdam branch of the State Hermitage Museum of St Petersburg. Prestigious exhibits, such as of Persian art or the Art Nouveau, change about twice per year, and they're as stately as you'd expect.

In 2009 the museum will expand into the Amstelhof (1683), a former almshouse

## A MEDLEY OF MUSEUMS

Whether it's modern art or art about cats, stately homes or tropical cultures, stories of historical tragedy or miracles of modern technology, Amsterdam offers a range of museums for any taste (visit [www.amsterdammuseums.nl](http://www.amsterdammuseums.nl)).

Most of the leading museums in town display captions in English. If captions are in Dutch only, you can usually get an English-language brochure (often free) or borrow a binder explaining the exhibits. Many museums have pleasant cafés with gardens or courtyards – good places to relax or read up.

As to be expected, weekends tend to be the busiest times, along with Wednesday afternoons when many primary schools have the afternoon off and children are herded into museums. The most common museum closing day is Monday.

A handful of museums offer free entry, but most charge admission. Adult admissions run from about €2.50 to €10, which is pretty reasonable by the standards of world capitals; special exhibitions may cost extra. Discounts are available for those aged over 65 (though rarely) or under 18, for students and holders of other types of cards and passes (see p245).

If you plan to be in the Netherlands for a while, get the **Museumkaart** (Museum Card; ☎ 0900-404 09 10, per call €0.35; [www.museumkaart.nl](http://www.museumkaart.nl)); over/under 26yr €35/17.50 plus €4.95 fee for first-time registrants), which gives you free (mostly) or discounted (occasionally) admission to several hundred museums around the country for a year. It's valid for most museums in Amsterdam, although not the Anne Frank Huis or the Royal Palace. After five or six museums the card will have paid for itself. Inquire at participating museums.

If you are making just one quick trip to Amsterdam, you might consider the **I Amsterdam Card** (per 24/48/72hr €33/43/53). It includes many of the same museums as the Museumkaart (though, again, not the Anne Frank Huis or the Royal Palace), a free canal cruise, freebies and discounts at a number of shops and attractions and a transit pass good for anywhere the GVB goes. The pass can come in handy: although Amsterdam is not an enormous city, a half-hour walk between museums can certainly eat into your limited time. The I Amsterdam Card is available at tourist office locations (p255).

The Rederij Lovers Museumboat day pass (p250) is also worth considering for the discounts it offers.

and sweeping courtyard next door. Now in the throes of renovation, the Amstelhof broke with social norms by housing women in small quarters of four beds each, rather than dormitories. Behind the handsome façade, however, little remains of the original interiors.

## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT STROLL

### Walking Tour

**1 Spiegel Quarter** Set off at the Singelgracht near the **Rijksmuseum** (p111) and head north into the nexus of art and antique shops, the **Spiegel Quarter**, along the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat. Historic prints, paintings and period furnishings can be found along this attractive lane in galleries such as **EH Ariëns Kappers** (p148) and **Jaski** (p148).

**2 Golden Bend** One of Amsterdam's swankiest patches of real estate, the aptly-named **Golden Bend** (p103) on Herengracht is awash with classical French flourishes. No other part of Amsterdam exudes more Golden Age wealth. The statue-studded mansion at **Herengracht 475** once belonged to art collector Jan Gildemeester; a painting in the Rijksmuseum depicts him proudly showing his collection to visitors.

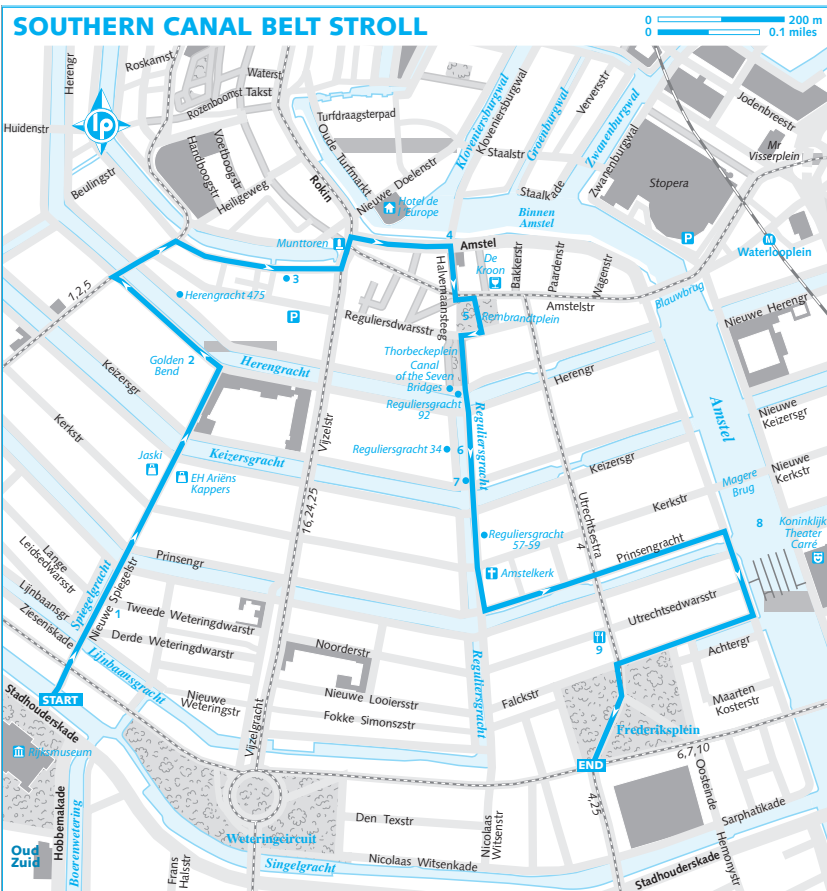
**3 Bloemenmarkt** The bustling **Bloemenmarkt** (Flower Market; p99) is a reminder of what it

means to have Tulip Fever. Rounding the eastern end of the market you'll immediately see one of Amsterdam's most enduring emblems, the striking **Munttoren** (Mint Tower; p48), which turned out precious little cash before falling into French hands.

**4 Amstel river** From the tower, head east along the **Amstel river** to take in the grand **Hotel de l'Europe** (p212), where polished skiffs moor at the terrace restaurant. This is a good spot to stand on Queen's Day, when boats bend over backwards to pass the low-lying bridge connecting to Muntplein.

**5 Rembrandtplein** At the bridge, turn south into tiny Halvemaansteeg (Half-Moon Lane) and the beating heart of the entertainment district around **Rembrandtplein** (p104). As you cross the square, stop to admire the statue of master painter Rembrandt. If it's coffee 'n' cake time, best make a beeline to **De Kroon** (p190) one of the most stylish 'grand cafés' equipped with an alluring upstairs terrace.

**6 Reguliersgracht** Saunter over shady **Thorbeckeplein** to the Herengracht, lean on the bridge and sigh over the gooey postcard vista of **Reguliersgracht**, aka the **canal of the seven bridges** (p104). Sights include the corner house at **Reguliersgracht 92**, decorated with the statue of a stork that canal-boat drivers fantasise had to do with



## WALK FACTS

**Start** Spiegel Quarter  
**End** Pata Negra  
**Distance** 4.2km  
**Duration** 1½ hours

midwifery. The house at **Reguliersgracht 34** has an unusual twin entrance and an eagle gable for the original owner, Arent van den Bergh (*arend* is a Dutch word for eagle).

**7 15 Bridges** Where the Keizersgracht and Reguliersgracht join up, there's a scene to outdo the mere seven bridges before: here you can count more than twice that number as you peer east-west and north-south. The beautiful carved wooden façade at Reguliersgracht

was made by a carpenter. A few steps further south you'll come to the **Amstelkerk** (p104), the curious wooden church with a belfry that still looks quite makeshift.

**8 Amstel river** From here, head east down this quiet section of the Prinsengracht till you reach the shores of the **Amstel river**. From this vantage point you can admire the comely **Magere Brug**, and beyond the *sluizen* (locks), the neon-lit roof of the **Koninklijk Theater Carré** (p105), the premier stage for musicals.

**9 Pata Negra** Now you can settle down to tapas and sangria at **Pata Negra** (p168), where the after-work crowds gather under the suspended garlic and shanks of cured ham. Then catch a tram or bus from **Frederiksplein**.

## OLD SOUTH

Drinking & Smoking p191; Eating p170; Shopping p152; Sleeping p219

This wedge-shaped district is one of Amsterdam's most *genteel*. It is roughly bordered by Stadhouderskade to the north, the Vondelpark to the west and Hobbemakade to the east. It's also variously known by its landmarks: some call it the 'Museum Quarter' (for the Rijks, Stedelijk and Van Gogh Museums), the 'Concertgebouw area' or the 'Vondelpark area'. All are worthy emblems.

The origin of this gentility goes back to real estate. By the 1860s the Canal Belt was no longer sufficient for the population needs of this city, rapidly expanding with the industrial revolution.

If the Canal Belt was the essence of urban planning, this round of expansion was a pure expression of market capitalism. Cheap tenement housing was built across Hobbemakade in the neighbourhood that came to be known as De Pijp, but wealthy investors wanted an upmarket neighbourhood for themselves and saw to it that tenement blocks and businesses were prohibited on this side. Instead, they thought it a suitable spot for a grand national museum (the Rijksmuseum) and an equally grand new concert hall (the Concertgebouw).

In the centre of it all is the Museumplein (p111), a large, grassy park bordered by a clutch of illustrious museums: the Rijksmuseum (p111), the Van Gogh Museum (below) and the Stedelijk Museum (p113). Off the southern fringe stands the grand entrance of the Concertgebouw (p111). Dotted in and around Museumplein is a wealth of shopping and dining options, and some lovely places to stay. The district also possesses some stunning buildings in the Amsterdam School style.

Museumplein was laid out to host the World Exhibition in 1883, but gained its lasting title only when the Rijksmuseum was opened two years later. One of many face-lifts lifted a triangle of turf at the southern end, dubbed the 'ass's ear' for its shape; it's a popular spot for sun worshippers. There's a large supermarket, Albert Heijn, concealed below.

For as long as anyone can remember, the square has been used for concerts, special events and political demonstrations. At other times it's a relaxing place to hang out, play hacky-sack, skateboard (ramp provided), toss a Frisbee or enjoy a picnic. In winter the long concrete pond is transformed into a festive skating rink. Near the pond you'll find a tic-tac-toe board that plays musical notes when you step on the different squares.

Many of the streets around the Museumplein are named for exemplary Dutch artists, musicians and writers. Pieter Cornelisz (PC) Hooftstraat between Stadhouderskade and the Vondelpark is the shopping street for the cream of society and the *nouveau riche*. (Sport utility vehicles are sometimes called 'PC Hooft tractors' for this reason.) You'll find some of the world's leading brands here, both in shops of their own name and in others, as well as a few surprisingly friendly cafés for a break. PC Hooft (1581-1647) was the son of a mayor of Amsterdam who grew up to become a historian, author and founder of a literary society that included Joost van den Vondel of Vondelpark fame. We wonder what Hooft would have made of such blatant commercialism.

### VAN GOGH MUSEUM Map p110

☎ 570 52 00; [www.vangoghmuseum.nl](http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl); Paulus Potterstraat 7; adult/child under 12yr/child 13-17yr €10/free/2.50, audio or palmtop tour €4; 🕒 10am-6pm Sat-Thu, to 10pm Fri

Next to the Stedelijk Museum building is the Van Gogh Museum, one of Amsterdam's must-sees. Opened in 1973 to house the collection of Vincent's younger brother Theo, it consists of about 200 paintings and 500 drawings by Vincent and his friends and contemporaries, such as Gauguin, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec and Bernard.

Vincent van Gogh was born in 1853 and had a short but astonishingly productive life. Through his paintings, the museum chronicles his journey from Holland (where his work was dark and sombre) to Paris

where, under the influence of the Impressionists, he discovered vivid colour. From there he moved to Arles, where he was incredibly productive, often completing a canvas every day.

Astoundingly, Van Gogh was self-taught as a painter and had a career that spanned less than a decade. A volatile character liable to mood swings, he famously cut off his ear after an argument with Gauguin. In 1890, while in the depths of depression, he finally committed suicide. He would come to be regarded as a giant among artists but during his lifetime Van Gogh sold only a single painting.

Famous works on display include *The Potato Eaters* (1885), an example of his sombre Dutch period, *The Yellow House*



## OLD SOUTH

**INFORMATION**

- German Consulate.....1 D3
- Italian Consulate.....2 D2
- Openbare Bibliotheek.....3 C4
- US Consulate.....4 C3
- Zuiderbad.....5 D2

**SIGHTS** (pp109-14)

- Concertgebouw.....(see 26)
- Diamond Museum.....6 C2
- House of Bols.....7 C2
- Philips Wing of Rijksmuseum.....8 C2
- Rijksmuseum.....9 D2
- Stedelijk Museum Building.....10 C2
- Van Gogh Museum.....11 C2

**SHOPPING** (p152)

- Arnold Cornelis.....12 C4
- Broekmans & Van Poppel.....13 C3
- Coster Diamonds.....14 C2
- De Waterwinkel.....15 C4
- De Winkel van Nijntje.....16 B6
- Lairesse Apotheek.....17 B3
- XSmall.....18 C3

**EATING** (p170)

- Bark.....19 C3
- CoBrA Cafe-Restaurant.....20 D2
- La Falote.....21 D4
- Renz's.....22 C3
- Sabor de Maria.....23 D4
- Sama Sebo.....24 C2

**DRINKING & SMOKING** (pp191-2)

- Wildschut.....25 C4

**NIGHTLIFE & ARTS**

- Concertgebouw.....26 C3
- Conservatorium van Amsterdam (through 2008).....27 C2

**SLEEPING** (pp219-20)

- Collector.....28 B3
- College Hotel.....29 D4
- Hilton Amsterdam.....30 A4
- Hotel Aalders.....31 C2
- Hotel Acro.....32 C2
- Hotel Bema.....33 C3
- Hotel Fita.....34 C2
- Museum Square Hotel.....35 B3
- Xaviera Hollander Bed & Breakfast.....36 C5

**See Vondelpark & Around Map p116**

**See De Pijp Map p119**

in Arles (1888), *The Bedroom* (1888) and several self-portraits and still lifes of sunflowers and other blossoms that shimmer with intense Mediterranean light. One of his last paintings, *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890), is an ominous work finished shortly before his suicide.

The permanent collection also includes many of the artist's personal effects. Van Gogh received a milk jug from Theo and used it in several works. There are also knots of wool which he used to study contrasts in colours.

Van Gogh's paintings are on the 1st floor; several other floors display his drawings and Japanese prints, and works by his friends, contemporaries and others he influenced, some of which are shown in rotation. The library (☎ 570 59 06; Museumplein 4; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) has a wealth of reference material for serious study.

The entrance queues can be long, as only so many visitors are allowed inside at a time. Come early or on Friday night, when the museum hosts special cultural events.

The museum's main building was designed by Gerrit Rietveld, the seminal Dutch architect. Behind it, reaching onto Museumplein, is a separate exhibition wing (1999) designed by Kishio Kurokawa, commonly referred to as 'the Mussel'.

### RIJKSMUSEUM Map p110

☎ 674 70 00; [www.rijksmuseum.nl](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl); Stadhouderskade 42; adult/child under 18yr €10/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu, to 10pm Fri

The Rijksmuseum (National Museum) is the premier art museum of the Netherlands, and no self-respecting visitor to Amsterdam can afford to miss it. Though most of the building is closed for renovations until early 2010, there is an excellent collection of around 200 masterpieces exhibited in a side section, the Philips wing. Still, over a million people visit every year, so come early to avoid the queues or buy your (printable) tickets online. The exact works on display in the Philips wing are subject to change.

The Rijksmuseum was conceived as a repository for several national collections, including art owned by the royal family. The collection includes some 5000 paintings, most importantly those by Dutch and Flemish masters from the 15th to 19th centuries. The emphasis, naturally, is on the Golden Age.

Pride of place is taken by Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* (1650), showing the militia led by Frans Banning Cocq, a future mayor of the city. The painting only acquired its name over time with a layer of grime (it's nice and clean now). Other 17th-century Dutch masters include Jan Vermeer (*The Milkmaid* and *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*), Frans Hals (*The Merry Drinker* and *The Merry Family*).

Other good sections are Sculpture and Applied Art (delftware, dolls houses, porcelain, furniture), Dutch History and Asiatic Art, including the famous 12th-century *Dancing Shiva*. The museum's famous print archives have some 800,000 prints and drawings.

Architecturally, the Rijksmuseum forms the gateway to the Museum Quarter. It was completed in 1885 to a design by Pierre Cuypers, who also designed Centraal Station four years later. Both buildings are a mixture of neo-Gothic and Dutch Renaissance. The neo-Gothic elements (towers, stained-glass windows) brought a hailstorm of criticism from Protestants including the king, who dubbed the building 'the archbishop's palace' (Cuypers was Catholic, and proudly so in his approach to architecture).

### MUSEUMPLEIN Map p110

#### Paulus Potterstraat

This vast, open park behind the Rijksmuseum was cleverly redeveloped in 1999-2000 and today is one of Amsterdam's busiest open spaces. Beneath the park are a car park and a supermarket, while back at street level there is a café, a skate ramp and a large, sparkling pond (perfect for ice-skating in winter).

### CONCERTGEBOUW Map p110

☎ 671 83 45; [www.concertgebouw.nl](http://www.concertgebouw.nl); Concertgebouwplein 2-6; ticket prices vary; ☎ box office 10am-7pm

The literal name 'Concert Building' scarcely does justice to this amazing facility, which attracts some 850,000 visitors a year to 800 shows. This makes it the busiest concert hall in the world but, refreshingly, it hasn't lost its common touch.

The Concertgebouw was completed in 1888 to a neo-Renaissance design by AL van Gendt. In spite of his limited musical knowledge, he managed to give the two-tiered Grote Zaal (Main Hall) near-perfect



## AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 3: SEAN CONDON *Simon Sellars*

Australian Sean Condon is the author of the bittersweet 'nonfiction novel' *My 'Dam Life*, about his time in Amsterdam and his bemused efforts to adapt to the rhythms of Dutch life (the book was saddled with the Orwellian epithet 'Down and Out In Amsterdam' by one reviewer). I prodded Sean to give me his appraisal of this eccentric town.

### Do you have a favourite part of Amsterdam? Anywhere to avoid?

My favourite is the Jordaan, because most of my friends live there. I dislike the main red-light area behind Warmeesstraat, because it's usually full of loutish drunken tourists who spoil the otherwise lovely, rosy ambience.

### Pick an Amsterdam cliché – now debunk it.

There are far fewer Dutch doors than you'd think.

### Describe your favourite, and least favourite, 'Amsterdam experience'.

My favourite is riding anywhere, any time, in any weather – on a bike. My least favourite is encountering groups of the aforementioned louts.

### Speaking of bikes, can there be anything funnier than a bicyclist giving a ride to a blowup sex doll?

Yes. Those big, wooden trays on the front of bikes, full of infants, that teachers use to transport kids from one place to another. Hilarious.

### What book set in Amsterdam would you recommend for newcomers?

There are few that I know of. There's *Amsterdam*, an excellent and lively history of the city by Geert Mak. Maybe Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam*, but I haven't read it. Some of the scenes early on in Ian Fleming's *Diamonds Are Forever* are set in Amsterdam, and they're cool.

### You're a writer – you must have a favourite Amsterdam bar.

Without doubt my favourite is Proeflokaal Fockinck (p184), a tiny *jenever* bar founded in the 17th century. It's congenial and a superb place to meet strangers. Every day I miss it and every day my liver thanks me that it's now on the other side of the world.

### Where do you like to eat in Amsterdam?

My favourite Amsterdam restaurant is De Reddende Engel, but it's in Antwerp, which should give you some idea of the culinary scene in Amsterdam. There is one place, on Leliegracht, called Christophe (p163) – it's excellent, but boy you'll pay for it. Also the Gouden Real on Prinseneiland used to be good – and it has a great setting, too.

### Do you have a favourite local slang or swear word?

Jammer (shame).

### Care to reveal Amsterdam's best-kept secret?

No.

### What annoys you the most about Amsterdam?

The appalling – and yet very expensive – food served by the rudest wait staff in Europe.

### How did living in Amsterdam change you?

It introduced me to the world beyond Australia, and now that I'm back here, I kind of wish it hadn't.

### Describe *My 'Dam Life* for someone who hasn't read it.

Unfortunate cover, great book. A love story about both my wife, Sally, and Amsterdam.

acoustics that are the envy of sound designers worldwide. Add in baroque trim, panels inscribed with the names of classical composers, a massive pipe organ and a grand staircase via which conductors and soloists descend to the stage, and you've got a venue where the best performers are honoured to appear.

In the 1980s the Concertgebouw threatened to collapse because its 2000 wooden piles were rotting. Thanks to new technology, the piles made way for a concrete foundation, and the building was thoroughly

restored to mark its 100th anniversary. The architect Pi de Bruin added a glass foyer along the southern side that most people hate, though everyone agrees it's effective.

### HOUSE OF BOLLS *Map p110*

☎ 570 85 41; [www.houseofbolls.com](http://www.houseofbolls.com); Paulus Potterstraat 14; €10, age 18yr & over; ☎ 12am-6pm Wed-Mon

Wanted to know what was slipped into your drink? This is the place to find out. An hour's self-guided tour takes you on a journey that will leave you stirred but

not shaken – that is, until you try the Tom Cruise moves on a TV monitor here for your friends. The visit includes a confusing sniff test, a distilled history of the Bols company and a cocktail made by one of its formidable bartenders, who train at the academy upstairs.

### DIAMOND MUSEUM *Map p110*

☎ 305 53 00; [www.diamantmuseum.nl](http://www.diamantmuseum.nl); Paulus Potterstraat 8; adult/child under 13yr/senior, student & child 13-18 yr €6/free/4; ☎ 9am-5pm More of a showroom than a serious gem collection, Amsterdam's diamond museum provides an interesting look at the history of the trade and the sparkling creations that have adorned the world's rich and powerful. Almost all of the exhibits are clever re-creations, in glass cases spread over two floors. It's run by **Coster Diamonds** (p154) next door, which kind of says it all.

### STEDELIJK MUSEUM BUILDING

*Map p110*

Paulus Potterstraat 13

Built in 1895 to a neo-Renaissance design by AM Weissman, this is the permanent

home of the National Museum of Modern Art, one of the world's great collections. However, at the time of writing it was closed for renovation and expansion until the end of 2009. Until then its modernist statements will appear in a former high-rise post office near Centraal Station, and at exhibition spaces around town; for full details see p69.

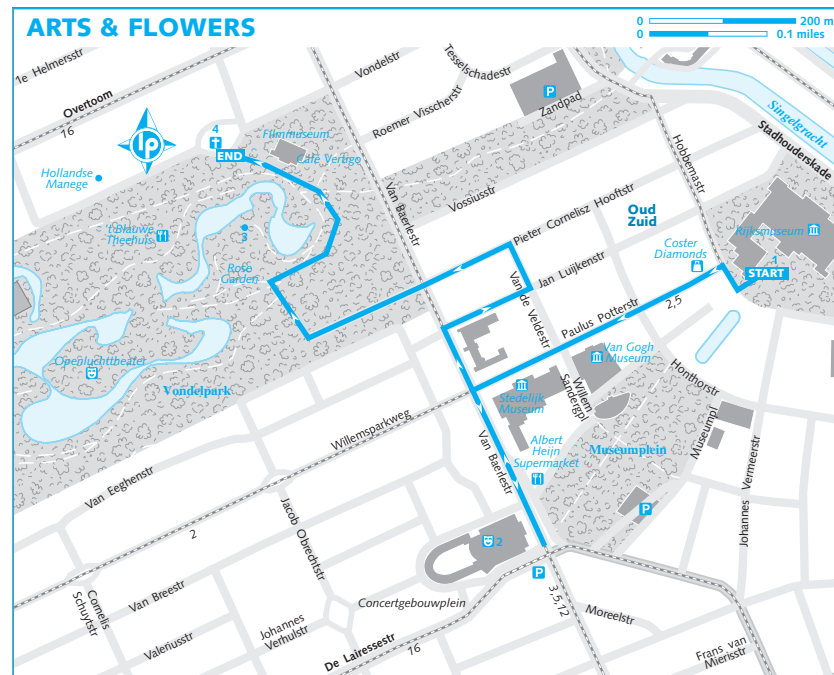
## ARTS & FLOWERS

### Walking Tour

**1 Museumplein** Although the **Rijksmuseum** (p111) will be closed due to construction until late this decade, its grand exterior makes a great starting point. You'll be looking out over **Museumplein** (p111), a monumental grassy expanse for lolling, strolling and open-air

### WALK FACTS

Start Museumplein  
End Vondelkerk  
Distance 4km  
Duration 1½ hours



concerts. To your right, on the corner of Hobbemastraat, is [Coster Diamonds](#) (p154), where you can take a free tour – diamonds are a kind of art, aren't they? Or you may prefer to continue along Paulus Potterstraat to the [Van Gogh Museum](#) (p109), with its modern, clam-like annexe. The main building of the [Stedelijk Museum](#) (p113) is next door, though it's closed for renovation till 2009.

**2 Concertgebouw** The neoclassical [Concertgebouw](#) (p111) is diagonally across Van Baerlestraat – check schedules for the free lunchtime concerts. Otherwise pick up a picnic at the big [Albert Heijn supermarket](#) on Museumplein.

**3 Vondelpark** Weave northwest through a quiet residential quarter. Shoppers may enjoy taking a detour to [Pieter Cornelisz Hoofstraat](#), Amsterdam's own little Regent St, towards the sprawling [Vondelpark](#) (opposite); highlights of the park include the [rose garden](#) and the [open-air theatre](#) (p202). Have a break and enjoy coffee and cake at parkside [Café Vertigo](#) (p192) at the [Filmmuseum](#) (opposite) or in ['t Blauwe Theehuis](#) (p171).

**4 Vondelkerk** Step out of the park to admire the horses at the [Hollandsche Manege](#) (opposite) and stop by the [Vondelkerk](#) (p117), a pretty 19th-century church that has been turned into an office complex. From here, you can head back into the park or along Vondelstraat towards the buzz of Leidseplein.

## VONDELPARK & AROUND

Drinking & Smoking [p192](#); Eating [p170](#); Shopping [p152](#); Sleeping [p220](#)

This pleasant, English-style park with ponds, lawns, thickets and winding footpaths was laid out on marshland in the 1860s and '70s as a park for the bourgeoisie. It made up for the loss of the Plantage, the existing city park that became residential around this time. The Vondelpark was soon surrounded by upmarket housing. Long and thin – about 1.5km long and 300m wide – the park is named after poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), the Shakespeare of the Netherlands.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the authorities turned the park into a temporary open-air dormitory for the droves of hippies who descended on Amsterdam. The sleeping bags are long gone and it's now illegal to sleep in the park.

The park is now used by one and all – joggers, in-line skaters, children chasing ducks or flying kites, couples in love, families with prams, teenagers playing soccer, even acrobats practicing or performing – and can be crowded on weekends, but never annoyingly so.

There always seem to be people performing in the park, and on a summer day a great place to follow the action is the upper terrace of [Café Vertigo](#) (p192). Also check out the open-air theatre (p202) and the lovely ponds and rose gardens.

### VONDELPARK [Map p116](#)

As vital to Amsterdam as Rembrandt, canals and coffeeshops, on a sunny day there's no place better than the Vondelpark. As people from all walks of life descend on this sprawling equivalent to New York's Central Park, a party atmosphere ensues. Some kick back by reading a book, others hook up with friends to share a spliff or cradle a beer at one of the cafés, while others trade songs on beat-up guitars. The Vondelpark offers an abundance of ponds, lawns, gardens and winding footpaths that encourage visitors to get out and explore.

### FILMMEUSEM [Map p116](#)

☎ 589 14 00; [www.filmmuseum.nl](#); Vondelpark 3 Not a museum with displays as such, the Filmmuseum has a large collection of memorabilia and a priceless archive of films that are screened in two theatres, often with live music. One theatre contains the Art Deco interior of Cinema Parisien, an early Amsterdam cinema. The [information centre](#) (☎ 589 14 35; Vondelstraat 69-71; admission free; 🕒 1-5pm Mon-Fri) has loads of books and DVDs that can be viewed in booths.

The museum's grand [Café Vertigo](#) (p192), with its theatrical balcony and expansive outdoor seating, is a popular meeting place overlooking the park. On summer evenings films are shown on the terrace.

At the time of writing the Filmmuseum was due to reopen in 2009 in a sleek new building in Amsterdam-Noord ([Map pp58-9](#)).

### HOLLANDSCHE MANEGE [Map p116](#)

☎ 618 09 42; [www.dehollandschemanegenl](#); Vondelstraat 140; 🕒 9am-10pm

Just outside the Vondelpark is the neoclassical Hollandsche Manege, an indoor riding school inspired by the famous Spanish Riding School in Vienna. Designed by AL van Gendt and built in 1882, the building was fully restored in the 1980s (but kept its charming horse-head façade). After you reach the arena, turn left and right again through the stable to the rear, up the stairs and into the café. You can sip a beer or coffee and, from the balcony, watch the instructor put the horses through their paces.

### ORGELPARK [Map p116](#)

☎ 515 81 11; [www.orgelpark.nl](#); Gerard Brandtstraat 26; tickets adult/child under 12yr/student & senior €12.50/5/7.50

Not a park as we know it, but a new stage for organ music located in a lovely restored church on the edge of the Vondelpark. The Orgelpark has three (soon to be four) big organs, and every year puts on over 100 events including concerts of classical, jazz and improvised music. Concerts are typically on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 8.15pm, and every Wednesday at 12.30pm there are free performances by organ students.

### DE VONDELTUIN [Map p116](#)

☎ 664 50 91; [www.vondeltuinnl](#); Vondelpark 7; skate rental 1/2/3hr adult €5/7.50/10; Mar-Oct Located near the Amstelveenseweg entrance at the southwestern end of the

## VONDELPARK &amp; AROUND

**INFORMATION**

Amsterdam Fitness & Health Club.....1 E2  
British Consulate.....2 C3  
De Vondelbuin.....3 B4  
FedEx/Kinko's.....4 D2  
HV Vereniging.....5 D1  
VVV.....6 E2

**SIGHTS** (pp115-17)  
Filmmuseum.....7 D2  
Hollandsche Manege.....8 D2  
Orgelpark.....9 C3  
Vondelkerk.....10 D2

**SLEEPING** (pp220-1)  
Apple Inn.....25 C4  
Borgmann Villa Hotel.....26 B3  
Flynt B&B.....27 D1  
Fusion Suites.....28 D2  
Hestia Hotel.....29 D2  
Hotel de Filosoof.....30 C2  
Hotel Piet Hein.....31 D2  
Hotel Roemer.....32 D2  
Hotel Vondel.....33 D2  
Hotel Zandbergen.....34 C3  
Owl Hotel.....35 D2  
Stayokay Amsterdam Vondelpark.....36 E2

**TRANSPORT**  
Avis Autoverhuur.....37 D1  
Europcar.....38 C2  
National Car Rental.....40 D2

**EATING** (pp170-1)  
Hap Himn.....16 D1  
Kinderkookkafé.....17 C3  
Lalibela.....18 C2  
Paloma Blanca.....19 C2  
Pasta di Mamma.....20 E2  
\* Blauwe Theehuis.....21 D2  
Waroeng Asje.....22 C2

**DRINKING & SMOKING** (p192)  
Café Vertigo.....(see 7)  
Het Groot Melkhuus.....23 C3

**NIGHTLIFE & ARTS** (see 7)  
Filmmuseum.....(see 7)  
Openluchttheater.....24 D3

## FRIDAY NIGHT SKATE

This weekly event ([www.fridaynightskate.com](http://www.fridaynightskate.com)) is a great way to see the city. You'll also get to meet new people: hundreds of in-line skaters (perhaps thousands in peak season) gather at 8pm near the Filmmuseum in the Vondelpark, for departure at 8.30pm. The route varies each week, but generally it's between 15km and 20km; expect the whole skate to finish by 10.30pm.

Skaters should be advanced and able to brake well; bring a helmet and knee protection. Even so, organisers caution, skating is at your own risk. The skate is cancelled if streets are wet, meaning that on average it actually takes place about twice a month.

park, this kiosk rents in-line skates and protective gloves, and has a café.

## VONDELKERK Map p116

Vondelstraat 77; ☎ 8am-6pm

Architect Pierre Cuypers' favourite church (1870-80), it suffered from a lack of funds during construction and a fire in 1904, and was marked for demolition in 1978. It's a charming steepled church, featuring a fascinating series of shapes with an octagon at its base. People in the offices inside are happy to let you in for a peek.



# DE PIJP

Drinking & Smoking [p192](#); Eating [p171](#); Shopping [p153](#); Sleeping [p222](#)

De Pijp is called the 'Quartier Latin' of Amsterdam thanks to its lively mix of people: labourers, intellectuals, immigrants and prostitutes, and now gays, lesbians and an ever-increasing number of higher-income professionals.

Enclosed by the Amstel in the east, Stadhouderskade in the north, Hobbemakade in the west and the Amstelkanaal in the south, this district is a large island connected to the rest of the city by 16 bridges. The district's name, 'the Pipe' (originally the 'YY neighbourhood'), presumably reflects its straight, narrow streets that are said to resemble the stems of old clay pipes, but nobody really knows. There is a surprising number of attractions for an area that began as the city's first 19th-century slum.

Its early shoddy tenement blocks, some of which collapsed even as they were being built in the 1860s, provided cheap housing not just for newly arrived workers drawn by the city's industrial revolution, but also for students, artists, writers and other poverty-stricken individuals. In the 1960s and '70s many of the working-class inhabitants left for greener pastures and the government began refurbishing the tenement blocks for immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. Now these immigrants are also moving out and De Pijp is attracting a wealthier breed of locals who are doing up apartments and lending the neighbourhood a more gentrified air.

East of Sarphatipark (below), near the Amstel, is **Kabouterhuis** (Gnome House; Map [p119](#); Ceintuurbaan 251-255). Its woodwork façade incorporates a couple of gnomes playing ball, a reference to the surname of the original owner, Van Ballegooijen (literally, 'of ball-throwing').

On the western border of De Pijp, and within view of the Rijksmuseum, there's a little red-light district along Ruysdaelkade, opposite Hobbemakade.

## ALBERT CUYPMARKT [Map p119](#)

**Albert Cuypstraat**; ☎ **9am-5pm Mon-Sat**  
Amsterdam's largest and busiest market is legendary for its huge variety – aromatic stalls selling Dutch cheese, olives, herbs and spices, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables. Clothes and other general goods are on sale too, often cheaper than anywhere else. If you want to experience the 'real' Amsterdam at its multicultural best, you're in the right place. The market was named after landscape painter Albert Cuyp (1620–91), whose paintings are in the Rijksmuseum.

The surrounding area teems with cosy cafés and eateries, many with an exotic flavour, as well as stylish shops and bars.

## HEIENEKEN EXPERIENCE [Map p119](#)

☎ **523 96 66**; [www.heinekenexperience.com](#); **Stadhouderskade 78**; admission €11 (under 18yr only with adult supervision); ☎ **10am–6pm Tue–Sun Sep–May, to 7pm daily Jun–Aug**

Right on the site of the old Heineken brewery you can take a self-guided tour that's tantamount to brew-worship. You can learn the history of the Heineken family, find out how the logo has evolved, and follow the brewing process from water all the way through to bottling. Along the way

you can watch Heineken commercials from around the world, join a Heineken bottle on its life's journey and drive a virtual dray horse.

If all this PR gets to be too much, you can drown your sorrows at free 'tasting' sessions at the end of the tour. Three glasses per person may be consumed – Homer Simpson would feel right at home. (Note: no smoking of any kind is permitted.) Allow 75 minutes for your visit, and expect lots of company; come before 11am to beat the crowds.

The actual brewery closed in 1988 due to inner-city congestion, and since then the building has been used only for tours and administration. The company's directorate is in the low-key premises across the canal. Heineken beer is brewed at a larger plant in 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch), in the south of the country, and also at the largest brewery in Europe at Zoeterwoude, located near Leiden.

## SARPHATIPARK [Map p119](#)

**Ceintuurbaan**; ☎ **24hr**  
This diverse little park was named after Samuel Sarphati (1813–66), a Jewish doctor, businessman and urban innovator. The grounds are a thoughtful mix of ponds,


<b>SIGHTS</b>	<b>(pp118–20)</b>	Klokspils.....20 C2
		Mamouché.....21 B2
		Más Tapas.....22 A2
		Heineken Experience.....23 A2
		Kabouterhuis.....3 D2
<b>SHOPPING</b>	<b>(p153)</b>	Turkye.....25 A3
		Zagros.....26 A2
		Zen.....27 A2
<b>SMOKING</b>	<b>(p192)</b>	
		DRINKING & SMOKING
		18 Twining.....28 A2
		Bar Ça.....29 B2
		Pluvage.....30 B2
		Sarphat.....31 C2
<b>EATING</b>	<b>(pp171–3)</b>	
		Albert Cuyp 67.....10 A2
		Bagels & Beans.....11 A2
		De Badcuyp.....12 A2
		Rialto Cinema.....35 B3
		Bat! House.....13 B2
		Caré de Pijp.....14 B2
		Café de Pijp.....15 B2
		SLEEPING <b>(p222)</b>
		Beween Art & Kitsch.....34 A2
		B&B.....16 A2
		De Burgermeister.....17 A2
		De Soepwinkel.....18 C2
		Bicycle Hotel Amsterdam.....35 B3
		Hotel Aalburg.....36 B3
		Gelateria Italiana Peppino.....19 C2

gently rolling meadow and wooded fringe. In the centre you'll see the Sarphati memorial (1886), a bombastic temple with a fountain, gargoyles and a bust of the great man himself. Water is pumped to the fountain via an underground pipe from a canal hundreds of metres away.

Sarphati's diverse projects – a waste-disposal service, a slaughterhouse, a factory for cheap bread, trades and business schools, the Amstel Hotel and a mortgage bank – exasperated the dour city council, though many of these ventures survive to this day.

## DE DAGERAAD Map p119

Dawn Housing Project; Pieter Lodewijk Takstraat;

 open to the public

Following the key Housing Act of 1901, which forced the city to rethink neighbourhood planning and condemn slums, the Dageraad housing estate was developed for poorer families between 1918 and 1923. One of the most original Amsterdam School architects, Piet Kramer, drew up plans for this idiosyncratic complex in collaboration with Michael de Klerk. The swirling contours of the main tower have been compared to a butter churn.

## PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

Drinking & Smoking [p192](#); Eating [p173](#); Shopping [p153](#); Sleeping [p222](#)

Immediately east of the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood lies the very leafy district known as the Plantage.

The 19th-century discovery of diamonds in South Africa led to a revival of Amsterdam's diamond industry and the Jewish elite began to move into the Plantage (Plantation), where they built imposing town villas.

Until then the Plantage was a district of parks and gardens, named after the plantations the Dutch tended in their colonies. In the 18th century, wealthy residents rented parcels of land here to use as gardens, and the area developed into a weekend getaway with teahouses, variety theatres and other establishments where the upper class relaxed in green surroundings.

East of Centraal Station and north of the Medieval Centre, Nieuwmarkt and Plantage areas, the islands of Kattenburg, Wittenburg and Oostenburg were constructed in the 1650s to handle the rapidly expanding seaborne trade.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) set itself up on the eastern island of Oostenburg, where it established warehouses, rope yards, workshops and docks for the maintenance of its fleet. Private shipyards and dockworkers' homes dominated the central island of Wittenburg. City architect Daniël Stalpaert's Oosterkerk (1671) on Wittenburgergracht was the last, and the least monumental, of the four 'compass churches' (the others were the Noorderkerk, Westerkerk and Zuiderkerk).

Admiralty offices and buildings arose on the western island of Kattenburg, and warships were fitted out in the adjoining naval dockyards that are still in use today.

North and east of the Eastern Islands, the Eastern Docklands, a one-time shipyard and warehouse district, sat derelict for decades, despite some excellent warehouse-style buildings. Recently, though, it's been the focus of a huge amount of attention from architects and architecture critics for its elaborate updates and extremely adventurous new construction. If you're looking for one place to see the cutting edge of Dutch – and indeed European – architecture, this is the place to come. When complete, there will be more than 8000 dwellings and 17,000 inhabitants.

## PLANTAGE

The key attraction here is the Artis Zoo ([right](#)); behind the characteristic eagle-topped gates you'll find Europe's oldest zoo. The Hortus Botanicus ([p123](#)) has been a herb garden since 1683 and is a repository of the valuable seeds and plants brought back by ships of the Dutch East India Company.

Across from the botanical garden lies the Wertheimpark, a brilliant shady spot for lazing by the canal Nieuwe Herengracht. It also contains a memorial to the victims of the Auschwitz concentration camp, their tragedy symbolized by shards of broken glass.

## top picks

### PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

- **Artis Zoo** ([right](#)) Apes to zebras, with a great aquarium and planetarium.
- **Energetica** ([p124](#)) Supercool museum of technology.
- **Entrepotdok** ([p123](#)) Dramatically renovated former warehouses.
- **Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ** ([p125](#)) Riverside concerts in a glistening glass wrapper.

Nearby, you can delve into the history of the Dutch resistance at the Verzetsmuseum ([p123](#)).

### ARTIS ZOO Map p122

 523 34 00; [www.artis.nl](http://www.artis.nl); Plantage Kerklaan 38-40; adult/senior/child 3-9yr/child under 3yr €17.50/16.50/14/free;  9am-5pm, to 6pm in summer

The world's third-largest zoo (and the oldest in mainland Europe) is the place to bring children in Amsterdam. Laid out in the former Plantage gardens, locals as well as tourists visit to stroll the lush,

**INFORMATION**

Centrum voor Seksuele Gezondheid	1 B4	Koffiehuis van den Volkebond	26 A3
Classic Canal Charters	2 C2	Odeïssa	27 D2
GG&GD STD Clinic	3 A4	Panama	(see 37)
Oppassentrale Kriterion	4 A4	Pancrus	28 A3
SOCA	5 B4	Voorloij 'Het Einde	29 C1
<b>SKITS</b>			
Artis Zoo	(pp 121-7)	<b>DRINKING &amp; SMOKING</b>	(pp 192-3)
Artis Zoo Entrance	6 B3	Bloem	30 B3
De Coover Windmill	8 C3	Brouwerij 't IJ	31 C3
Energetica	9 B3	Café Koosje	32 A3
Entrepotdok	10 B3	KHL	33 D2
Hollandsche Schouwburg	11 A3	Star Ferry	(see 36)
Hortus Botanicus	12 A3	<b>NIGHTLIFE &amp; ARTS</b>	(see 36)
Muidepoort	13 B4	Binnhuis	34 A4
Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ	(see 36)	Kriterion	35 D2
Nationaal Vabondsmuseum	14 A3	Lisboa	35 D2
Naval Officers' Residences	15 B2	Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ	36 A1
Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum	16 B2	Panama	37 C2
Persmuseum	17 D3		
Verzetsmuseum	18 A3	<b>SLEEPING</b>	(pp 222-4)
Werfmuseum 't Kromhout	19 B3	Eden Lancaster Hotel	38 A3
		Hotel Hortus	39 A3
<b>SHOPPING</b>	(p 153)	Hotel Parklane	40 A3
De Ode	20 D1	Hotel Rembrandt	41 A3
Frank's Smokehouse	21 B3	Liliane's Home	42 A4
		Lloyd Hotel	43 D2
<b>EATING</b>	(pp 172-4)	Movenpick Hotel	44 B1
A Tavola	22 A3	City Centre	
Abe Veneto	23 A3	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Fitteren	24 B1	Canal Bus Stop	45 B2
Gare de l'Est	25 D3		

well-manicured paths. Packed with listed 19th-century buildings and monuments, it feels like a zoological museum.

In addition to the expected zoo attractions – the big cats, apes and gorillas – the **African savannah** is a highlight. Another must-see is the **aquarium**, a graceful purpose-built hall with some 2000 fish. The tanks are enormous and the variety of colourful fish stunning. Here you'll also see a rainforest, a tropical coral reef and a cross-section of an Amsterdam canal. The **planetarium** gives fascinating shows with Dutch commentary and a summary in English. The entrance fee includes all of these venues.

**HORTUS BOTANICUS** Map p122

☎ 625 90 21; [www.hortus-botanicus.nl](http://www.hortus-botanicus.nl); Plantage Middenlaan 2a; adult/child €6/3, ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, to 9pm daily Jul & Aug, to 4pm daily Dec & Jan

Established way back in 1638, this venerable garden became a repository for tropical seeds and plants brought in (read: smuggled out of other countries) by Dutch trading ships. From here, coffee, pineapple, cinnamon and palm-oil plants were distributed throughout the world.

The 4000-plus species are kept in wonderful structures, including the colonial-era seed house and a three-climate glasshouse (1993). The 300-year-old cycad is possibly the world's oldest potted plant. The butterfly house is a hit with kids and stoned adults. Guided tours (additional €1) are held at 2pm Sunday year-round and also at 7.30pm Sunday in July and August.

**VERZETSMUSEUM** Map p122

Resistance Museum; ☎ 620 25 35; [www.verzetsmuseum.org](http://www.verzetsmuseum.org); Plantage Kerklaan 61; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-15yr €5.50/free/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat-Mon

This museum shows, in no uncertain terms, how much courage it takes to actively resist an adversary so ruthless that you can't trust neighbours, friends or even family. The exhibits give an excellent insight into the difficulties faced by those who fought the occupation from within – as well as the minority who went along with the Nazis. Topics include the concepts of active and passive resistance, how the illegal press operated, how 300,000 people were kept in hiding and how all this could be funded. Labels are in Dutch and English.

**HOLLANDSCHE SCHOUWBURG**

Map p122

Dutch Theatre; ☎ 626 99 45; [www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl](http://www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl); Plantage Middenlaan 24; admission free; ☎ 11am-4pm, closed Yom Kippur This historic theatre – first known as the Artis Theatre after its inception in 1892 – quickly became a hub of cultural life in Amsterdam, staging major dramas and operettas. In WWII the occupying Germans turned it into a 'show theatre' for Jews, then a detention centre for Jews awaiting deportation. Up to 80,000 Jews passed through here on their way to the death camps.

In 1961 the building was demolished except for the façade and a bit of the interior, which became a memorial. Glass panels are engraved with the names of all Jewish families deported, and upstairs is a modest exhibit hall with photos and artefacts of Jewish life before and during the war.

**NATIONAAL VAKBONDSMUSEUM**

Map p122

National Trade Union Museum; ☎ 624 11 66; [www.deurbucht.org](http://www.deurbucht.org); Henri Polaklaan 9; adult/concession €2.50/1.25; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sun, closed public holidays

Architect HP Berlage considered this building his most successful work, and it's easy to see why. Built in 1900 for the General Netherlands Diamond Workers' Union (ANDB), it's a wonder from the diamond-shaped pinnacle to the magnificent hall with its brick arches, murals, ceramics and leadlight windows by famous artists of the day. The soaring, atrium-style staircase is graced with a chandelier three storeys tall.

All that will be enough for most visitors. Those with an abiding interest in labour issues will find the displays (in Dutch) a bonus.

**ENTREPOTDOK** Map p122

Alexanderplein

The area east of the Plantage was the stomping ground of the VOC, aka the Dutch East India Company, which grew rich on sea trade in the 17th century. The VOC owned this 500m row of warehouses, conveniently located in a customs-free zone and the largest storage depot in Europe at the time. Some of the original façades have been preserved, and the facility has been converted into desirable



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offices, apartments and nice cafés, with tables at the water's edge (see p193).

### DE GOOYER WINDMILL [Map p122](#)

**Funenkade 5**  
This 18th-century grain mill is the sole survivor of five windmills that once stood in this part of town. It moved to its current spot in 1814, when the nearby Oranje-Nassau barracks were built and blocked the wind. The mill was fully renovated in 1925 and is now a private home. Alongside, the public baths were converted into the [Brouwerij 't IJ](#) (p192) in 1985. The mill makes a postcard canvas when seen from the central harbour, looking west down the Nieuwe Vaart canal.

### MUIDERPOORT [Map p122](#)

**Alexanderplein**  
This grand classical arch was built in 1770 as a gateway to the city. On the south side you'll see the Amsterdam emblem of three St Andreas' crosses, while on the other side there's the previous emblem, of a cog ship. In 1811 Napoleon rode triumphantly through the gate with his royal entourage, and promptly demanded food for his ragged troops. The 1st floor, just under the grey dome, is now occupied by a financial advisors body.

## EASTERN ISLANDS

When the Plantage was constructed in the 1680s, the original sea dyke was moved north to what are now the Hoogte Kadijk and Laagte Kadijk (the high and low sections of the quay dyke). Apart from the impressive Scheepvaartmuseum ([right](#)), the only sight out here is Energetica ([below](#)), a quirky array of transformers, street lamps and crackling generators.

### ENERGETICA [Map p122](#)

☎ 422 12 27; Hoogte Kadijk 400; adult/child under 12yr €3/free; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri  
Housed in a former power station, this quirky museum has a bewildering array of whizz-bang equipment that conjures up visions of mad scientists. Galleries are named for key pioneers (Marconi, Minckelers), and the soaring main hall is filled with steamship engines, gas streetlamps, antique lifts (elevators) from Vienna and Paris and high-voltage generators that send lightning between

enormous V-shaped prongs. There's also an early refrigerator that resembles a brass cement-mixer. Its guides are volunteers, some of them retired engineers, and they'll enthusiastically escort you through centuries of technological history.

### NEDERLANDS SCHEEPVAARTMUSEUM [Map p122](#)

**Netherlands Shipping Museum; ☎ 523 22 22; www.scheepvaartmuseum.nl; Kattenburgerplein 1; ship Amsterdam adult/child under 6yr/senior & child 6-17yr €4/free/4; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun**  
Since 1981, this historic admiralty building has housed one of world's most extensive collections of maritime memorabilia. Early shipping routes, naval combat, fishing and whaling are all explained in loving detail, and there are 500 models of boats and ships. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the museum was shut till mid-2009 for a major renovation.

You can, however, visit a full-scale replica of the United East India Company's 700-tonne *Amsterdam*, one of the largest ships of the fleet. Actors in 18th-century costume re-create shipboard life, and you'll see the Great Cabin is beautifully set for an elegant dinner. The ship is moored outside [NEMO](#) (p69).

### WERFMUSEUM 'T KROMHOUT [Map p122](#)

☎ 627 67 77; www.machinekamer.nl; Hoogte Kadijk 147; adult/child €4.75/2.75; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue

On the outer side of the dyke is an 18th-century wharf that still repairs boats in its western hall. The eastern hall is a museum devoted to shipbuilding and even more to the indestructible marine engines that were designed and built here. Anyone with an interest in marine engineering will love the place; others will probably want to move on. Signage is almost entirely in Dutch only.

## EASTERN DOCKLANDS

There are few sights in the Eastern Docklands, but all the new construction is well worth a look. A good place to start is the wavy roof of the Passenger Terminal, where huge cruise ships moor, and the sparkling performance halls of the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ ([opposite](#)). The wonderful Press Museum ([opposite](#)) is full of colourful ad placards.

## BICYCLES: THE MAN-MACHINE RULES

While researching this book, we couldn't help but take notes on some of the better bicycle sightings on Amsterdam's streets:

- A man with one leg in plaster pedalling his bike with the other leg, with crutches strapped to his back.
- A man riding a bike with a blow-up sex doll strapped to his back.
- Four drunks riding one bike.
- A woman riding a bike while wearing stilettos and with her G-string showing.
- A girl riding side-saddle while kissing the boy piloting the bike.
- A customised bicycle modelled after Dennis Hopper's hog in *Easy Rider*.
- A man riding with one hand while holding a plate-glass window with the other, seemingly oblivious to the threat of severed arteries in the event of emergency braking.
- A man who must have been over 100 years old riding a bicycle at about 2km/h.
- A woman riding a bicycle weaving and wobbling all over the place, her vision almost totally obscured by a massive bunch of flowers.
- A group of kids playing football while riding bicycles.
- Numerous mothers riding three-wheelers with toddlers in a barrow attached to the front or in a box towed along behind.
- A bicycle barrelling down a side street with no-one on it.
- An abandoned bicycle that looked as though it had been twisted into a figure 8.
- A bicycle up a tree.
- Bicycles in canals.
- Dutch police riding the same crappy bicycles as everyone else.
- Almost everyone steering their bikes with one hand and talking on a mobile phone or eating a sandwich with the other, while perilously weaving in and out of trams, trucks and cars.

### Tips

- When on foot, don't play the dumb tourist and stand in the city's dedicated bike lanes staring at the sights: you'll be knocked over by a speeding bike before you can say 'moederneuker', because here you give way to them.
- When riding, watch for cars. Cyclists have the right of way, except when vehicles are entering from the right, although not all motorists respect this. Also watch for dumb tourists (see above).
- Watch out for tram tracks – if your wheel gets caught in one, you will break your bones.
- By law, after dusk you need to use lights on your bike (front and rear) and have reflectors on both wheels.
- Always lock your bike securely. Bike theft is rampant.

### Fast Facts

Amsterdam has 400km of bike paths, identified by signage and their reddish colour. There are an estimated 600,000 bicycles in Amsterdam at any given time. The bike-parking garage at Centraal Station has space for 2500 bicycles.

### Find a Bike

- Visit the Fietsfabriek (p153) for custom bicycles.
- Combine two Dutch passions, beer and bicycles: hire a Fietscafé (p185), a mobile, pedal-powered bar that seats up to 17 people per bike, with a big beer keg attached. One pedals, the other 16 sit at the bar and drink.

See [p240](#) for a list of bike-rental shops.

### MUZIEKGEBOUW AAN 'T IJ [Map p122](#)

☎ tickets 788 20 00, office 788 20 10; www.muziekgebouw.nl; Piet Heinkade 1; bldg admission free, performance prices vary; ☎ ticket office noon-7pm Mon-Sat

The bold and beautiful 'Music Building on the IJ' brings the long-standing theatre IJsbreker (which changed its name to the new building) and the jazz house [Bimhuis](#) (p197) under one roof. This performance complex was some 20 years in the making, and designed by the Danish firm 3xNielsen.

Even if you don't catch a show here, the building is a feast for the eyes. Its [Star Ferry café](#) (☎ 10am-1am Sun-Fri, to 2am Fri & Sat) makes a great stop for the view alone. On the upper floor you'll find the computerised 'sound garden', a perfect diversion for the small fry.

### PERSMUSEUM [Map p122](#)

**Press Museum; ☎ 692 8810; www.persmuseum.nl; Zeeburgerkade 10; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-18yr €3.50/free/2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sun**

The caretaker of Dutch journalism history, this museum is loads more interesting to non-Dutch speakers than it may sound. Housed in sleek new premises, it has a large collection of historic newspapers (going all the way back to 1600), political and editorial cartoons and press photos, as well as a great stock of old publicity posters, many of them quite amusing.

## ARCHITECTURE OF THE EASTERN DOCKLANDS

### Cycling Tour

**1 Lloyd Hotel** Arrive by tram 26; take a moment to explore the lobby bar and shop of the landmark **Lloyd Hotel** (p223). As you pedal along Borneokade, across the shipping channel you'll see former warehouses used by the cocoa trade, while closer in are large yachts and commercial vessels.

**2 Scheepstimmermanstraat** Once you round the end of the island onto Stokerkade, you'll get a good view across the former shipping channel to **Scheepstimmermanstraat**, a fascinating collection of houses where owners were free to build to their own designs, making

it the most colourful and diverse group of houses in this district. You can cross the little footbridge in the middle of the channel to see the homes from the front (although they're better viewed from the water side).

**3 Red footbridge** You won't be able to ride a bike across the **red footbridge** – you'll barely be able to walk it – but it certainly demands a look-see. Take a left on Stuurmankade and head west. Take the flat bridge at Kwartiermeesterstraat.

**4 Whale** The footbridge deposits you by the **Whale** apartment building (1999), the landmark of Sporeburg Eiland. Its sloping roof and base make it seem more imposing than its dozen storeys would suggest, but also somehow more open and airy. From here make a dogleg left and then right, and you're on the Verbindingsdam to KNSM Eiland, named for the Royal Netherlands Shipping Company.

**5 Piraeus** Once over the bridge, follow the path to the right towards Levantkade. The heavy black buildings on the left are the stark **Piraeus** housing complex by Hans Kollhoff and Christian Rapp.

**6 Barcelonaplein** Head around the inlet at Levantplein, and you'll see Bruno Albert's **Barcelonaplein** with its wrought-iron 'gate' spanning the entire height of the façade. This 'superblock' (170m long) is built in neoclassical style and has a round plaza at its centre. The harbour views are quite sought-after by young professionals.

**7 Venetië** Continue on Levantkade to the end and the **Venetië** housing complex (1996). This giant ring of white single-family homes bristles with balconies, loggias and voids in between to create a feeling of space and comfortable asymmetry.

**8 Azartplein** From Venetië, head west along KNSM-Laan. The apartment buildings on the right are named for Greek philosophers, giving a whole new meaning to 'neoclassical'. The broad artery of KNSM-Laan will take you to

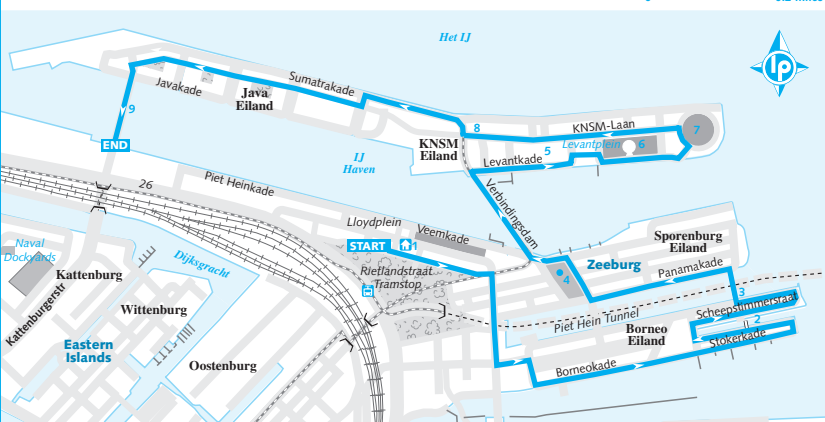
**Azartplein**, where you can catch a path through the residential neighbourhood that runs next to Sumatrakade. This route gives a good impression of what it's like to live in these communities, with kids playing and locals localising.

**9 Jan Schaeferbrug** The path ends near the **Jan Schaeferbrug**, the bridge named for an activist city councillor who famously said 'You can't live in clappertrap'. You can take the bridge back toward Piet Heinkade (turn right and it eventually drops you at Centraal Station).

### CYCLE FACTS

**Start** Lloyd Hotel  
**End** Jan Schaeferbrug  
**Distance** 6km  
**Duration** 2½ hours

## ARCHITECTURE OF THE EASTERN DOCKLANDS



# OOSTERPARK & AROUND

Drinking & Smoking p194; Eating p174; Sleeping p224

Named after the lush English-style landscape park at its centre, the southeastern district of Oosterpark was built in the 1880s. The large eponymous park was the first laid out in Amsterdam.

At the time, the city's diamond workers suddenly found they had money to spare, thanks to the discovery of the gems in South Africa. About a third of Jewish families worked in the diamond industry, and many of them could finally afford to leave the Jewish quarter for this new district beyond the Plantage (the delectable parklands where only the wealthiest could afford to live). Signs of the lower-middle-class heritage have long since disappeared and now it's similar to the other 19th-century slums that arose around the Canal Belt. Much of the real estate in this area is owned by the University of Amsterdam.

On the northern fringe you'll find the acclaimed Tropenmuseum (below), which gives insights into Dutch colonial activities in the East Indies. The park has a large pond and several monuments, including a memorial to murdered filmmaker Theo van Gogh (see p44). This 4.5m-high work of curved steel is named the **Scream**. The park also host numerous events such as main stages for the annual Holland Festival and the Roots Festival.

To the south lies the Amstelstation, a key metro and railway station of use to some 50,000 travellers daily. The reason to visit is the several intriguing wall murals by artist Peter Alma (1886–1969), including an idealised depiction of trains converging on an almighty wheel in an unlikely landscape of mountains and cities.

## TROPENMUSEUM Map p129

☎ 568 82 15; [www.kit.nl](http://www.kit.nl); Linnaeusstraat 2; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-17yr/senior or student €7.50/free/3.75/5; 🕒 10am-5pm

Completed in 1926 to house the Royal Institute of the Tropics, and still a leading research institute for tropical hygiene and agriculture, this fascinating museum houses a large collection of colonial artefacts, presented with insight, imagination and a fair amount of multimedia.

A huge central hall, with galleries over three floors, seeks to re-create daily life in several tropical countries. You can visit an African market, a Mexican-style cantina and a life-sized *yurta* (traditional felt hut) and hear push-button recordings of native musical instruments. An absorbing part of the exhibit is the Cabinet of Curiosities, the fascinating display of exotica (found in every good colonialist's home) containing ritual masks, long dug-out canoes and dead butterflies.

There's a great giftshop, and the pleasant Soeterijn Café and the **Ekeko Restaurant** (☎ 568 86 44) serve food that relates to current exhibits and performances.

The **Tropeninstituut Theater** (☎ 568 82 15; 📺 box office noon-4pm Mon-Sat) has a separate entrance and screens films as well as hosting music, dance, plays and other performances by visiting artists.

## OOSTERPARK Map p129

📍 s'-Gravesandestraat; 🕒 dawn-dusk

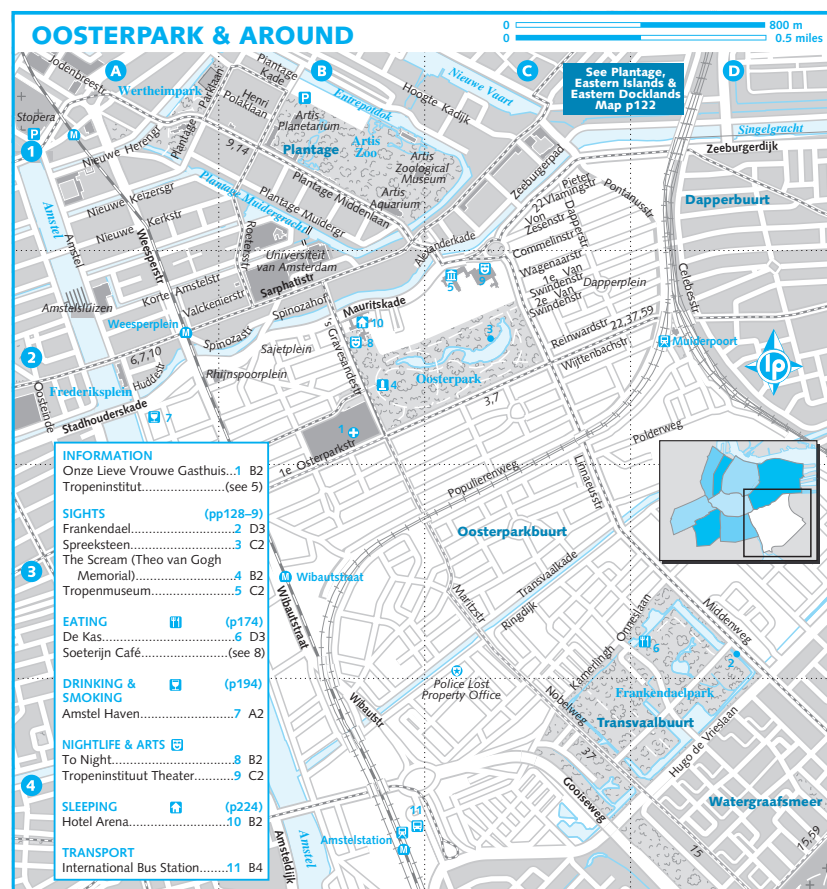
This sprawling park was laid out in the 1880s to accommodate the nouveaux rich of the city's diamond traders who benefited from the South African diamond boom.

The park makes a fine diversion if you're heading to the nearby **Tropenmuseum** (left). Between the museum and the large pond stands the **Spreeksteen**, a little Hyde Park Corner where orators of every ilk can have their say; see [www.spreeksteen.nl](http://www.spreeksteen.nl) for the erratic schedule.

## FRANKENDAELE Map p129

☎ 774 43 99; Middenweg 72; free admission; 🕒 gardens dawn till dusk

As early as the 18th century, wealthy Amsterdammers would spend their summers in plush country retreats south of Plantage on a tract of drained land called Watergraafsmeer. The last survivor of this era is Frankendael, an elegant Louis XIV-style mansion; at the time of writing it was due to reopen in mid-2008 after a sweeping restoration. The house backs onto a formal garden that's open to the public, but be sure to view the forecourt with gushing fountain and statues of Bacchus and Ceres. The property is swathed in a larger landscape garden with walking paths, decorative bridges and the remains of follies.





## OUTER DISTRICTS

North of the Jordaan, the wharves and warehouses of the **Western Islands** (Westelijke Eilanden) were abuzz with activity in the early 17th century. The Golden Age was taking off, the Dutch still dominated the sea trade, and money flowed into this old harbour like beer from the barrel. The wealthy Bicker Brothers, both mayors of Amsterdam, even built their own Bickerseiland here to cater for their ships.

Few tourists make it out here, partly because the district is shielded from view by a railway line, but it's a wonderful area to explore, with cute drawbridges and handsome old warehouses nestled in quiet lanes. Many addresses have been converted to charming homes and artists studios. The Prinseneiland and Realeineiland (named after the 17th-century merchant Reynier Reael) are the prettiest of the isles. The narrow bridge linking the two, the Drieharingenbrug ('Three Herrings Bridge'; [Map pp58–9](#)), is a quaint replacement for the pontoon that used to be pulled aside to let ships through.

By all means visit the Zandhoek ([Map pp58–9](#)), a photogenic stretch of waterfront. Now a modern yacht harbour, back in the 17th century it was a 'sand market', where ships would purchase bags of the stuff for ballast. Many a VOC skipper lived hereabouts, carousing in local bars and enjoying the view over the IJ between voyages. The street south of Zandhoek is the Galgenstraat (Gallows St), which on a clear day afforded a look at the executions in Amsterdam-Noord. In those days it was called entertainment.

The sights become more scattered as you move away from Amsterdam's lovely old centre, but the nuggets you'll find out here are definitely worth the trip: top-rated art museums, stylish architecture and lush greenery in recreation areas, just for starters.

### WESTERGASFABRIEK [Map pp58–9](#)

☎ 586 07 10; [www.westergasfabriek.nl](#); Haarlemmerweg 8-10

A stone's throw northwest of the Jordaan, this late-19th-century Dutch Renaissance complex was the city gasworks until it was all but abandoned in the 1960s, its soil contaminated. The *fabriek* has re-emerged, thankfully, as a new cultural and recreational park, with lush lawns and a long pool suitable for wading, sports facilities and even child care. The aesthetic of surrounding **Westerpark** goes from urban plan to reedy wilderness, with marshes and shallow waterfalls.

Inside the main buildings you'll find cinemas, cafés, restaurants, nightspots and creative office spaces. Watch for events in the **Westergasterras** (p197), a slick, postindustrial party venue.

### HET SCHIP HOUSING ESTATE

[Map pp58-9](#)

☎ 418 28 85; [www.hetschip.nl](#); Spaarndammerplantsoen 140; adult/student/senior €5/2/2.75; ☎ 1-5pm Thu-Sun

This remarkable housing estate (1920) is a flagship of the Amsterdam School of architecture (p51), and is located west of Amsterdam harbour. The triangular block, loosely resembling a ship, was designed by Michel de Klerk for railway employees.

The rocket-like tower has no purpose apart from linking the wings of the complex. The museum shows workers apartments and the ex-post office at the 'bow' of the 'ship' with the original interior. It is now home to the Documentation Centre for Social Housing, with a permanent display of architecture called *Poste Restante*. Look out for the yellow *telefooncel* where workers would dial the telephone numbers for customers.

### AMSTELPARK [Map pp58-9](#)

Europaboulevard; ☎ 8am-dusk

South of the ringway, in the suburb of Buitenveldert, lies the vast Amstelpark, grounds of an international flower show in 1972. The park is a paradise for kids, with a petting zoo, minigolf, pony rides and a playground. In summer a miniature train chugs its way around the park. Other attractions include rose and rhododendron gardens, and art exhibitions are held in the Glazen Huis (Glass House), the Orangerie and the Papillon Gallery.

Just outside the south edge of the park you'll see the **Riekermolén**. In a field southwest of the mill you'll find a statue of a sitting Rembrandt, who made sketches here along the riverbank.

To get there, take the metro to Amsterdam RAI or tram 4.

### ELECTRISCHE MUSEUMTRAMLIJN AMSTERDAM [Map pp58-9](#)

Tram Museum Amsterdam; ☎ 673 75 38; [www.museumtram.nl](#); Amstelveenseweg 264; return ticket adult/senior & child €4/2; ☎ 11am-6pm Sun mid-Apr–Oct, plus 1pm & 3pm Wed Jul & Aug Beyond the southwestern extremities of the park, just north of the Olympic Stadium, is the former Haarlemmermeer Station, which houses the tram museum. Historic trams sourced from all over Europe run between here and Amstelveen, making a great outing for kids and adults alike. A return trip takes about 1¼ hours (see website for schedule) and skirts the large Amsterdamse Bos recreational area.

### AMSTERDAM RAI [Map pp58-9](#)

☎ 549 12 12; [www.rai.nl](#); Europaplein 22

This exhibition and conference centre (featured, by the way, in Jacques Tati's 1971 film *Traffic*) is the largest such complex in the country. The building opened in 1961 and just keeps expanding, for the car, fashion, horse-jumping and 50-odd other shows held here every year. RAI stands for *Rijwiel en Automobiel Industrie*, the bicycle and auto association. To get there, take the metro to the Amsterdam RAI stop or tram 4.

### OLYMPIC STADIUM [Map pp58-9](#)

☎ 305 44 00; Olympisch Stadion 21

The grand Olympic Stadium was designed by Jan Wils, a protégé of famous architect HP Berlage, and is functionalist in style. The arena was built for the 1928 summer Olympic Games, and has a soaring tower from which the Olympic Flame burned for the first time during competition. The stadium is classified as a national monument; today it hosts sporting events and concerts.

Much of the housing in southwest Amsterdam originates from the time of the 1928 Games. Many of the streets and squares in the area bear Greek names like Olympiaplein and Herculesstraat.

Trams 16 and 24 go from Centraal Station direct to the stadium.

### AMSTERDAMSE BOS [Map pp58-9](#)

Amsterdam Woods; ☎ visitors centre 545 61 00; [www.amsterdamsebos.nl](#); Bosbaanweg 5; admission free; ☎ visitors centre 8.30am-5pm The product of a 1930s make-work programme, this woody recreation area a few

kilometres southwest of Amsterdam is a boon for urban nature-lovers. You'll find a petting zoo, a sports park, a rowing course with hire craft, and a pancake house, not to mention the open-air **Amsterdamse Bos Theatre** (p202) that stages plays in summer. The **forestry museum** (☎ 676 21 52; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) covers flora, fauna and the construction of the park. To get here, take bus 70, 171 or 172 from Centraal Station, or ride the **historic tram** (left) from the Haarlemmermeer Station.

### COBRA MUSEUM

☎ 547 50 50; [www.cobra-museum.nl](#); Sandbergplein 1, Amstelveen; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-16yr/senior & student €7/free/2.50/4; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun

Artists from Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands formed the CoBrA movement after WWII. (The name is derived from their capital cities.) Members included Asger Jorn, Corneille, Constant and the great Karel Appel, but the group lasted for just three years (1948–51). Changing exhibits are on show as well; expect to see bold colours and busy designs. The art is less of a unified whole than a philosophy, inspired by Marxism, of using materials at hand to create painting, sculpture, even poetry.

Take bus 170 or 172 from Centraal Station or tram 5 to the end of the line in Amstelveen.

### LIVING TOMORROW PAVILION

☎ 203 04 00; [www.livtom.com](#); De Entrée 300, Amsterdam-Zuidoost; adult/child under 10yr/student & child 10-12yr €11.50/free/9; ☎ by reservation

A bathroom mirror that displays the latest news? Or a smart washing machine that keeps your red socks out of a white load? These are just a couple of the innovations on display at the Living Tomorrow Pavilion, a shoe-shaped home and office of the future. A spate of companies (among others, Phillips, 3M and HP) show off their applications in a living and working environment. The curiously beautiful shape of the building itself comes from the idea of an object turned inside-out. Visits are by reservation only, and 1½ hour tours in both English and Dutch take place on Saturday.

## FURTHER AFIELD

### KRÖLLER-MÜLLER MUSEUM

☎ 0318-591 627; www.hogeveluwe.nl; De Hoge Veluwe National Park; park only adult/child €7/3.50, park & museum adult/child €14/7, car surcharge €6; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Nestled within the Netherlands' largest park, this delightful museum was once owned by Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller, a wealthy German-Dutch couple. He wanted hunting grounds, she wanted a museum site – they got both.

The museum has works by Picasso, Gris, Renoir, Sisley and Manet, but it's the Van Gogh collection that makes it world-class. It's about 10km into the park. There's also an evocative **sculpture garden** behind the museum.

Ticket booths at each of the three entrances (Hoenderloo, Otterlo and Rijzenburg) provide basic information and useful maps. By car, take the A10 ring road to the A1 towards Amersfoort and Apeldoorn. Exit at Exit 19 (N304) and follow the signs. Trains to Apeldoorn (single/return €13/23.10) take just over one hour, plus a 20-minute bus ride from the train station into the park.

## VILLAGES OF THE AMSTEL

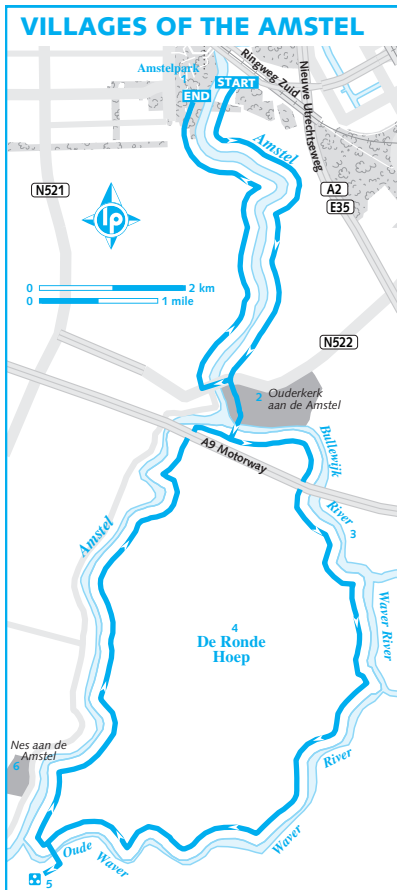
### Cycling Tour

**1 Amstelpark** Leave from the **Amstelpark** (p130), a pretty municipal park about 300m south of the A10 motorway, which has a rose garden, an open-air theatre and several cafés. Note that cycling isn't allowed in the park.

**2 Ouderkerk aan de Amstel** A couple of kilometres south, along the quiet east bank of the Amstel, is **Ouderkerk aan de Amstel**, a pretty, affluent village (actually a few centuries older than Amsterdam) with plenty of riverside cafés and handsome houses.

**3 Bullewijk River** At Ouderkerk, cross the bridge over the **Bullewijk River** and turn left (east) opposite the ancient Jewish cemetery, following the right bank of the Bullewijk. You pass under the A9 motorway, and 1km further on, at a spot with a pleasant restaurant, the Waver River comes in from the right (south) – follow that.

**4 De Ronde Hoep** You'll have great views of **De Ronde Hoep**, a wild, sparsely populated peat



### CYCLE FACTS

Start Amstelpark  
End Amstelpark  
Distance 30km  
Duration Three to four hours

area drained by settlers about 1000 years ago. It attracts many birds, oblivious to Amsterdam's skyscrapers looming in the distance. The Waver narrows and becomes the Oude Waver, and when you come to the two hand-operated bridges, you'll clearly see that the land is below water level.

**5 Bunker** At the southern end of the route lies a squat riverside **bunker**, one of 38 defensive forts built around Amsterdam at the turn

of the 20th century (and outmoded by the 1920s). Here you rejoin the Amstel and turn right (north), following the bank back toward Amstelveen.

**6 Nes aan de Amstel** Just north of here, the village of **Nes aan de Amstel**, across the river, has some delightful café-filled wooden terraces – admire them from a distance, as there's no bridge close by.

**7 Amstelpark** Crossing north under the A9, the final leg of the journey provides a view of the modern skyline of Amsterdam-Zuidoost. An interesting diversion takes you across the bridge at Ouderkerk to the west bank and around the fringes of the green Amstelland area, with oodles of all-too-cute garden allotments. The Amstelpark lies just to the north.

## A DAM GOOD BIKE RIDE

### Cycling Tour

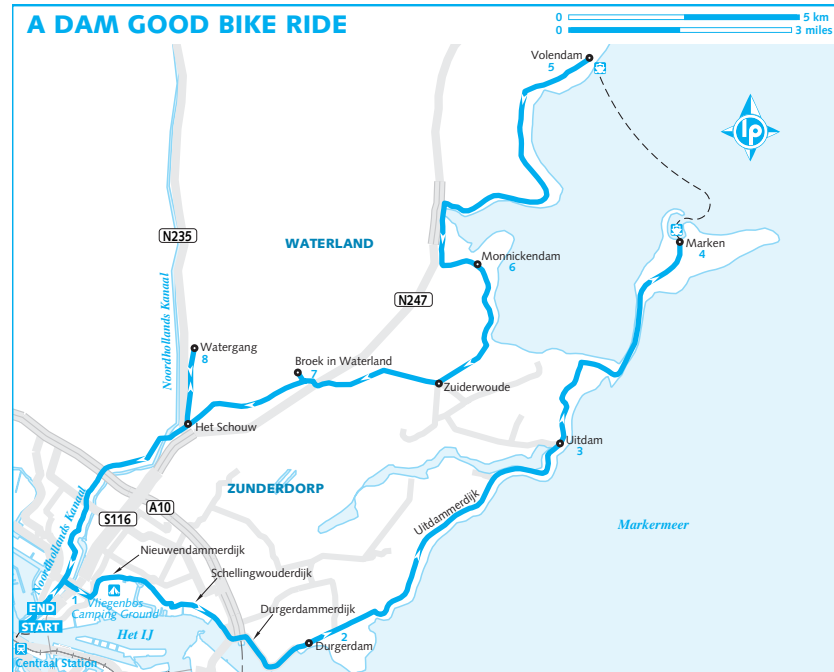
**1 Noordhollands Kanaal** Take the free Buiksloterweg ferry from behind Centraal Station across the IJ, then continue 1km along the

west bank of the **Noordhollands Kanaal**. Do a loop onto and over the second bridge, continue along the east bank for a few hundred metres and turn right under the freeway and along Nieuwendammerdijk past the Vliegenbos camping ground. Follow Schellingwouderdijk under the two major road bridges, when it becomes Durgerdammerdijk, and you're on your way.

**2 Durgerdam** The pretty town of **Durgerdam**, spread along the dyke, looks out across the water to IJburg, a major land-reclamation project with thousands of new homes. Further north, the dyke road passes several lakes and former sea inlets – low-lying, drained peat lands that are now key breeding sides for birds, among them plovers, spoonbills and herons. Climb the dyke at one of the vantage points for sweeping views to both sides.

### CYCLE FACTS

Start Noordhollands Kanaal  
End Noordhollands Kanaal  
Distance 55km  
Duration Seven to 10 hours



**3 Uitdam** The road – now called Uitdammerdijk – passes the town of **Uitdam**, whose 160 inhabitants can usually be found near the yacht harbour, the campground or the swimming pool, as there's not much else goin' down.

**4 Marken** Take the road leading right (east) and proceed along the causeway to the former island of **Marken**, a one-time fishing community in a startlingly isolate setting, with houses on piles.

**5 Volendam** From Marken, take the summer ferry (one-way adult/child €4.25/3.25, 30 minutes, 11am to 6pm, every 30 to 45 minutes mid-March through October) to **Volendam**. This picturesque fishing port has reinvented itself as a tourist town, but the back streets behind the harbour hold the most charm.

**6 Monnickendam** Head south along the sea dyke towards **Monnickendam**, with its many old fishing homes and 15th-century church. About 1.5km south of Monnickendam, turn right (southwest) towards Zuiderwode.

**7 Broek in Waterland** Continue to **Broek in Waterland**, a pretty hamlet with homes painted a particular shade of grey, 'Broeker grijs', after the landscapes painted here by Claude Monet and others. Then cycle along the south bank of the Broekervaart canal towards Het Schouw on the Noordhollands Kanaal.

**8 Watergang** Bird-watchers may want to head up the east bank towards **Watergang** and its bird sanctuary. Otherwise, cross the Noordhollands Kanaal (the bridge is slightly to the north) and follow the west bank back down to Amsterdam Noord; it's straight pedalling all the way to the ferry that takes you back to Centraal Station.

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**BLUELIST**<sup>1</sup> (blu,list) *v.*  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## SHOPPING

### top picks

- **Concerto** (p150)  
*The place for settling many a musical score.*
- **Noordermarkt** (p151)  
*For art, antiques and assorted whatnots.*
- **American Book Center** (p137)  
*From art to Zen, all titles in English.*
- **Droog Design** (p142)  
*In Dutch, that means sizzling interiors.*
- **Bloemenmarkt** (p150)  
*Bag your beautiful bloomin' bulbs here.*
- **Puccini Bomboni** (p142)  
*Sweet-smelling instruments of death by chocolate.*
- **Santa Jet** (p148)  
*How 'bout a grinning skull for someone you love?*
- **Eva Damave** (p143)  
*Tempting togs by a funky and unique stylist.*
- **Miauw** (p146)  
*Stock up on threads for all your nine lives.*
- **Concrete** (p139)  
*Where photos meet fashion under one roof.*

# SHOPPING

Amsterdam was once the warehouse of the world, stuffed with riches from the far corners of the earth. The Dutch empire has gone the way of the dodo, but vendors here still have a knack of bringing you rare, exotic or just plain wacky goods. Sure, you may be able to find glowing Mexican shrines or banana-flavoured condoms back home, but Amsterdam has entire shops devoted to such items.

Some popular gifts include tulip bulbs, rounds of Gouda cheese and bottles of *jenever* (Dutch gin). Fantastic bargains are rare, but it's worth chasing photographic art, recorded music, vintage and Dutch designer clothing, diamonds and antiquarian books. For a souvenir of quality, try a Delft blue vase – or a custom-made bong. There's definitely something for everyone.

The Dutch have mastered the art of casual fashion, and it streams right out of the no-nonsense side of the national character. The result is simple, affordable and practical designs that don't get caught in the spokes.

The best shops are in charming canal houses on cobblestone streets, in a village-like ambience. The Negen Straatjes area has the best boutiques. But Amsterdam also has wonderful outdoor markets, from Waterlooplein's vast flea market to more intimate, low-key venues where organic produce, spices and flowers are sold from carts on tree-lined squares.

## SHOPPING STREETS

You won't find any huge shopping malls in town, but you can scratch the chain-store itch on Nieuwendijk and in the Magna Plaza shopping gallery; the department and clothing stores of busy Kalverstraat and Leidsestraat are a little more upscale. Fancy PC Hooftstraat is for major fashion brands like Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.

The most satisfying browsing is among the pint-sized boutiques of the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys), within the Western Canal Belt. The Jordaan bristles with quirky shops and galleries, while antique and art buffs head for the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat in the Southern Canal Belt.

## OPENING HOURS

Generally, shops are open between 9am and 6pm Tuesday to Saturday, with the exception of Thursday, with late-night shopping until 9pm. Monday tends to have shorter hours, from noon till 6pm, while shops in the Canal Belt areas are generally open 1pm to 6pm Sunday. Art galleries keep limited hours and are often only open afternoons from Wednesday to Sunday. Shops selling smart drugs tend to stay open into the evenings. Where hours vary significantly from these opening times, we've noted it in individual listings. Note, however, that many shops operate on limited schedules during summer holidays.

## CONSUMER TAXES

The Dutch abbreviation for value-added tax is BTW, and it's calculated into the purchase price. The standard rate of BTW is 19% (20% from 2009), while a reduced rate of 6% applies on certain items such as groceries and books. Provided you are not a citizen of the European Union, and you are buying expensive items that you will export from the EU within three months, you may be entitled to a refund of the tax, minus a service fee.

The store must subscribe to the Global Refund system (look for the sticker in the window), your purchase there must total at least €50 in a single day, and you must request a Global Refund cheque at the time.

If you are departing the EU from Schiphol airport, present your goods along with your receipt, passport, air ticket and your Global Refund cheque at the Global Refund office in Terminal 3. You can receive cash, a credit to your credit card or a bank cheque.

If you leave the EU from another airport, inquire locally, but generally you must take your goods and documents to customs for authorisation.

## BARGAINING

For a nation of born traders the Dutch don't haggle much, if only because most retailers aren't set up for it. Flea-markets, art galleries and antique shops are among the few places where you'll be tempted to try.

## A SHOPPER'S GLOSSARY

Virtually any sales clerk you meet in Amsterdam will speak English, but to make things quick, here's a short list of words you're likely to encounter on signage:

**kassa** – cashier

**kassakorting** – discount taken at register

**korting** – discount, as in '25% korting'

**laatste dagen** – final days

**opruiming, uitverkoop** – clearance sale

**soldes** or **sale** – sale

**tot** or **t/m** – up to, as in 'tot 50% korting'

**vanaf** or **va** – literally 'and up', as in '€20 va' (€20 and up). Note that this can be a clever ploy in which, for example, a clothing rack marked '€10 va' includes just a few items at that price – the rest can be much higher.

## CITY CENTRE

The old core contains Amsterdam's greatest stock of emporia, from multilevel department stores to vendors of your favourite boudoir duds. In Nieuwmarkt, much of the action takes place at the Waterlooplein flea market, but veer away and you'll discover home-grown shops that are much sweeter and more low-key.

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

### HERMAN BROOD GALERIE

Map pp62-5

Art & Antiques

☎ 623 37 66; Spuistraat 320

This gallery is dedicated to Herman Brood, Amsterdam's legendary rocker and club promoter (1946–2001) who shone brightly before crashing big-time on drugs and alcohol. His oil paintings are upstairs from the busy Café Dante.

### AMERICAN BOOK CENTER

Map pp62-5

Books

☎ 625 55 37; www.abc.nl; Spui 12

Recently relocated here, this excellent five-storey store is the biggest source of English-language books in Amsterdam. Its greatest strengths are in the artsy ground-floor department, but upstairs there's fiction and oodles of special-interest titles, plus a good travel-guidebook section. It also stocks foreign periodicals (eg the *New York Times*).

### ATHENAEUM BOOKSHOP & NEWSAGENCY

Map pp62-5

Books

☎ 622 62 48; Spui 14-16

This multilevel store on the square has a vast array of both usual and unusual books and

cheerful, helpful staff. The separate newsagency on the corner is your best choice for international newspapers and magazines.

### AU BOUT DU MONDE

Map pp62-5

Books

☎ 625 13 97; Singel 313; ☎ Mon-Sat

From angels to Zen, this tranquil two-storey shop stocks books on Eastern and Western philosophy, Tibetan Buddhism, Freud, alternative medicine and pretty much anything else for your religious, psychological or spiritual needs.

### WATERSTONE'S

Map pp62-5

Books

☎ 638 38 21; Kalverstraat 152

Four storeys and a central location near the Spui make Waterstone's a great resource for English-language books (often discounted). There's an emphasis on travel guides, magazines, newspapers and novels.

### PINOKKIO

Map pp62-5

Children's

☎ 622 89 14; www.pinokkio.net; Magna Plaza, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 182

This pleasant shop stocks wooden and educational toys, rocking horses, wooden vehicles, replica canal houses, mobiles and, of course, lots of Pinocchio dolls. Since this is Holland, there's also a Miffy section.

### C&A

Map pp62-5

Clothing

☎ 530 71 50; Beurspassage 2

There's little that's fancy about this Euro-chain (what's a designer brand?), but it's a fine choice if you need inexpensive knockabout clothes. Choose carefully and you may even find some wares with style.

**H&M** Map pp62-5

Clothing

☎ 624 06 24; Kalverstraat 125

This fashion chain store has up-to-the-minute clothes for all ages at several locations. You may find higher quality elsewhere, but prices are remarkably low.

**UNIVERSITY SHOP** Map pp62-5

Clothing

☎ 525 36 55; Spui 23

The University of Amsterdam has a lovely logo, and you can wear it on your lovely person with T-shirts or sweatshirts, or carry it around on book bags or bottle openers.

**DE BIJENKORF** Map pp62-5

Department Store

☎ 621 80 80; Dam 1

The city's most fashionable department store in the highest-profile location, facing the Royal Palace, it has a small restaurant or snack bar on each floor. Design-conscious shoppers will enjoy the well-chosen clothing, toys, household accessories and books.

**CLOTHING SIZES****Women's clothing**

Aus/UK	8	10	12	14	16	18
Europe	36	38	40	42	44	46
Japan	5	7	9	11	13	15
USA	6	8	10	12	14	16

**Women's shoes**

Aus/USA	5	6	7	8	9	10
Europe	35	36	37	38	39	40
France only	35	36	38	39	40	42
Japan	22	23	24	25	26	27
UK	3½	4½	5½	6½	7½	8½

**Men's clothing**

Aus	92	96	100	104	108	112
Europe	46	48	50	52	54	56
Japan	S	M	M	M	L	L
UK/USA	35	36	37	38	39	40

**Men's shirts (collar sizes)**

Aus/Japan	38	39	40	41	42	43
Europe	38	39	40	41	42	43
UK/USA	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½

**Men's shoes**

Aus/UK	7	8	9	10	11	12
Europe	41	42	43	44½	46	47
Japan	26	27	27½	28	29	30
USA	7½	8½	9½	10½	11½	12½

Measurements approximate only, try before you buy

**HEMA** Map pp62-5

Department Store

☎ 638 99 63; Nieuwendijk 174

What used to be the nation's equivalent of Marks & Spencer or Woolworths has undergone a facelift and now attracts as many design aficionados as bargain hunters. Expect low prices, reliable quality and a wide range of products, including good-value wines and delicatessen goods.

**MAISON DE BONNETERIE**

Map pp62-5

Department Store

☎ 531 34 00; Rokin 140

Exclusive and classic clothes for the whole family are featured here. Men are particularly well catered for with labels like Ralph Lauren and Armani, best purchased during the brilliant 50%-off sales, but there is still plenty for the ladies. Note the amazing chandeliers and beautiful glass cupola.

**VROOM & DRESMANN**

Map pp62-5

Department Store

☎ 622 01 71; Kalverstraat 201

Slightly more upmarket than Hema, this national chain is popular for its clothing and cosmetics. Its fabulous cafeteria, La Place, serves well-priced, freshly prepared salads, hot dishes and pastries.

**FEMALE & PARTNERS**

Map pp62-5

Erotica/Clothing

☎ 620 91 52; www.femaleandpartners.nl; Spuistraat 100

Everything you need for your inner dominatrix...or the one who's waiting for you at home. Female & Partners is filled with clothing, undies, leather and toys for women and those who love them. Thank goodness men aren't the only ones who get to have fun!

**LAUNDRY INDUSTRY** Map pp62-5

Fashion

☎ 420 25 54; www.laundryindustry.com; Spui 1

Hip, urban types head here for well-cut, well-designed clothes by this Dutch design house. Watch glamorous couples coveting soft leather coats and perfectly fitted suits. There's another branch at Magna Plaza, but the Spui location is the main store.

**CRACKED KETTLE** Map pp62-5

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 624 07 45; www.crackedkettle.nl; Raamstreeg 3  
Cheers! Run by a couple of home brewers, this delightful shop stocks about 80 Dutch beers as well as German *Rauchbier* (smoked

beer), Belgian Kriek and Great Divide Yeti Imperial Stout, to name a few. It also carries beer glasses, and ships worldwide.

**DE BIERKONING** Map pp62-5

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 625 23 36; Paleisstraat 125

Beer. Just beer. Some 950 varieties including hundreds from Belgium, Germany, Britain and, of course, Holland – plus glasses, mugs and books on home brewing. It's centrally located right near the Royal Palace, so you have no excuse not to go.

**LE CELLIER** Map pp62-3

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 638 65 73; Spuistraat 116

You'll find a splendid selection of Dutch *jenever*s, absinthe, spirits and liqueurs, a super range of Old and New World wines and around a hundred beers.

**BEAUFORT** Map pp62-5

Jewellery

☎ 625 91 31; www.beaufortsieraden.nl; Grimburgwal 11; ☎ Tue-Sat

Exquisite handcrafted contemporary jewellery is created on site; many of the pieces combine silver and gold. The necklaces and rings are particularly beautiful.

**BLUE NOTE** Map pp62-5

Music

☎ 428 10 29; Gravenstraat 12

This is the place for jazz in Amsterdam. You'll find a wide range of artists – Dutch, European and American – as well as Japanese pressings, lounge music, and a few listening decks.

**FAME MUSIC** Map pp62-5

Music

☎ 638 25 25; Kalverstraat 2-4

This megastore has an enormous number of titles with broad (and mainstream) collections of pop, jazz and classical CDs, DVDs and videos. It also sells tickets to big concerts. Sale prices can be quite reasonable.

**RITUALS** Map pp62-5

Perfume &amp; Cosmetics

☎ 344 92 22; Kalverstraat 73

The flagship store of this heavenly brand (now a successful global franchise) turns out sublime products focused on enlivening everyday cleaning, refreshing, relaxing and energising rituals – from bathing to washing the dishes. We especially love its Rice Scrub, Hammam Body Mud and Lotus Massage Oil.

**AMSTERDAM PHOTOGRAPHY**

Map pp62-5

Photography

☎ 621 12 56; www.scottgeggert.com; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 114; ☎ noon-8pm

Classic and experimental shots of Amsterdam at its most photogenic, especially at night. Photos can be printed up to A2 size, matted and framed. Its congenial owner, Scott from New York, is happy to mail your choice home.

**CONCRETE** Map pp62-5

Photography/Fashion

☎ 0900 262 73 83; www.concrete.nl; Spuistraat 250

Part exhibition space showing rotating exhibitions of adventurous photography, graphics and illustration, and part cool clothes store. Features floating racks of zany Walter van Beirendonck T-shirts and jeans, Dutch labels Razk and D-Cent, plus interesting gear from Maharishi, Obey, Buddhist Punk, Michiko Koshino, Homecore and Minus Ung.

**KALVERTOREN SHOPPING CENTRE**

Map pp62-5

Shopping Centre

www.kalvertoren.nl; Singel 457

This popular, modern shopping centre contains Vroom & Dreesmann, a small Hema, and big-brand fashion stores like Replay, Quiksilver, Levi's, Timberland and DKNY.

**MAGNA PLAZA** Map pp62-5

Shopping Centre

☎ 626 91 99; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 182

This grand 19th-century landmark building, once the main post office, is now home to a marvellous upmarket shopping mall with over 40 stores stocking fashion, gifts and jewellery – everything from Mango and Sissy Boy to Pinokkio.

**CHILLS & THRILLS** Map pp62-5

Smart Drugs

☎ 638 00 15; Nieuwendijk 17

Always packed with tourists straining to hear each other over thumping techno music, this busy shop sells herbal trips, E-testing kits, psychoactive cacti, amino-acid and vitamin drinks, novelty bongos and life-size alien sculptures. Check out the minivaporiser, a smoke-free way to consume grass.

**INNERSPACE** Map pp62-5

Smart Drugs

☎ 624 33 38; www.innerspace.nl; Spuistraat 108

Known for good service and information, this large shop started as a supplier to large parties, and now the shop sells herbal ecstasy, psychoactive plants and cacti. True



to its origins, it's also a good place for party info and tickets.

## MAGIC MUSHROOM GALLERY

Map pp62-5 Smart Drugs  
☎ 427 57 65; [www.magicmushroom.com](http://www.magicmushroom.com);  
Spuistraat 249

The nifty bubble-glass displays will put the zap on your head even before you buy anything. The cool, open-plan 'gallery' has the best choice of 'shroom products and souvenirs in town. Feel free to wobble the garden swing while you nurse a smart drink, or wait for the herbal XTC to kick in.

## BAZAR

Map pp62-5 Souvenirs

☎ 638 44 04; Nieuwendijk 128  
If you collect kitsch souvenirs or want to buy the boys on the bucks' night some gifts (so they don't go blabbing back home), then this is the place to head for the widest range of ridiculous tourist trinkets – everything from rude-shape egg fryers to fluffy clog slippers.

## 3-D HOLOGRAMMEN

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 624 72 25; Grimborgwal 2; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-5.30pm Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun & Mon  
This fascinating (and trippy) collection of holographic pictures, jewellery and stickers will delight even the most jaded peepers.

## BLOND

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 06 2468 4086; [www.blond-amsterdam.nl](http://www.blond-amsterdam.nl);  
Singel 369; ☎ Tue-Sat  
Actual blondes Femque and Janneke glaze plates and dishes in designs that

## SMART SHOPS & 'SHROOMS

Just as raves and house music were hitting Amsterdam in the early 1990s, smart-drug shops began popping up all over town and filling a retail niche for New Age and designer drugs. Mostly funky but occasionally quite swanky, these vendors now stock a wild array of hallucinogens such as herbal joints, seeds (poppy, marijuana, psychoactive), mood enhancers and aphrodisiacs, both organic and synthetic in origin. Like marijuana in Dutch coffeshops, these soft drugs are perfectly legal to buy over the counter in Amsterdam, if not for you to take back home.

That said, the days may be numbered for magic mushrooms, or at least ones sold legally. Named for the psychotropic chemicals psilocybin and psilocin, these fungi have been blamed for a recent series of high-profile incidents involving tourists, including the death of a French schoolgirl who jumped from an Amsterdam bridge after eating the plants. As we went to press, the Dutch government had called for a ban on magic mushrooms, and barring a last-minute compromise – such as stiffer controls on buyers, as proposed by Amsterdam mayor Job Cohen – smart shops will take 'shrooms off their shelves in 2008.

Whatever mind-bending products you do pick up in a smart shop, ask what dosage to consume and what to expect from your trip, and staff should be eager to put you on the right plane.

are hilarious, adorable and very colourful: ladies lunching, beach scenes, chocolates, and cheeses. You can custom order as well.

## FAIR TRADE SHOP

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 625 22 45; Heiligeweg 45  
This charity shop features quality, stylish products including clothes, toys, CDs and ceramics from developing countries. The company works directly with producers and provides ongoing business training.

## RED LIGHT DISTRICT

ANTIQUARIAAT KOK Map pp62-5 Books

☎ 623 11 91; [www.nvva.nl](http://www.nvva.nl); Oude Hoogstraat 14-18  
A wide and engaging range of used and antiquarian stock (literature, coffee-table books, old prints etc) is sold here, including biology, art and architecture titles.

## WONDERWOOD

Map pp62-5 Design & Homewares

☎ 625 37 38; [www.wonderwood.nl](http://www.wonderwood.nl); Rusland 3;  
☎ noon-6pm Wed-Sat & by appt  
Head here for originals or reproductions of '40s and '50s Dutch furniture design. Classics include the T46 coffee table by Hein Stolle, works by Gijs Bakker and Han Pieck, and the box chair, which folds up into its own box – you can actually ship it with your luggage!

## GEELS & CO

Map pp62-5 Food & Drink

☎ 624 06 83; Warmoesstraat 67; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Operating from this aromatic store for over 140 years, this distinguished tea-and-coffee merchant also sells chocolate, teapots and coffee plungers. Be sure to visit the interesting little [museum](#) (☎ 2-4.30pm Tue & Sat) upstairs.

## HANS APPENZELLER

Map pp62-5 Jewellery

☎ 626 82 18; [www.appenzeller.nl](http://www.appenzeller.nl); Grimborgwal 1;  
☎ Tue-Sat  
Appenzeller is one of Amsterdam's leading designers in gold and stone, known for the simplicity and strength of his designs. If his sparse work is not to your taste, all along the same street is a row of jewellery shops of all kinds.

## ABSOLUTE DANNY

Map pp62-5 Sex Shop

☎ 421 09 15; [www.absolutedanny.com](http://www.absolutedanny.com); Oudezijds Achterburgwal 78  
Named by Dutch *Playboy* as Amsterdam's classiest sex shop, Absolute Danny specialises in fetish clothing, lingerie and leather, plus hard-core videos and dildos just for fun.

## KOKOPELLI

Map pp62-5 Smart Drugs

☎ 421 70 00; [www.consciousdreams.nl](http://www.consciousdreams.nl);  
Warmoesstraat 12  
Were it not for its main trade, you might swear this large, beautiful space was a fashionable clothing or homewares store. In addition to mushrooms and smart drugs, there's an art gallery, internet facilities, books and a chill-out lounge area overlooking Damrak.

## CONDOMERIE HET GULDEN VLIES

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 627 41 74; [www.condomerie.nl](http://www.condomerie.nl); Warmoesstraat 141; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Where the well-dressed Johnson shops. Perfectly positioned for the Red Light District, this boutique stocks hundreds of types of condoms, lubricants and saucy gifts. Some of the condoms are decorated like minitropical scenes, or may remind you of your favourite cartoon character.

## HIMALAYA

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 626 08 99; [www.himalaya.nl](http://www.himalaya.nl); Warmoesstraat 56; ☎ Mon-Sat  
What a surprise: a peaceful, New Age oasis in the Red Light District. Stock up on crystals, incense and oils, ambient CDs and books on the healing arts, then visit the lovely tearoom.

## NIEUWMARKT

JACOB HOY & CO

Map pp62-5 Alternative Medicine

☎ 624 30 41; Kloveniersburgwal 12; ☎ Mon-Sat  
This charming chemist's shop – with its walls of massive, wooden drawers – has

been selling medicinal herbs, homeopathic remedies and natural cosmetics since 1743. You can also get teas and seasonings for chicken or fish.

## PO CHAI TONG

Map pp62-5 Alternative Medicine

☎ 428 49 56; Waterloooplein 13; ☎ Mon-Sat  
If nothing seems to take away your stress, fatigue or jet lag, pay a visit to Dr Kai Zhang's kindly Chinese herbal-medicine and acupuncture shop. It's far from fancy, but clients have included opera singers and conductors from the nearby Stoperla.

## TYPO GALLERY

Map pp62-5 Art

☎ 623 85 52; [www.ewaldspieker.nl](http://www.ewaldspieker.nl); Groenburgwal 63; ☎ ring for opening hours  
A peek inside the artistic mind of Ewald Spieker, who creates graphic art out of typography. He's been exhibited all over and published books of his work. Just a few of his works are for sale; the red 'YES' made of stacks of cardboard had our name written all over it.

## BOOK EXCHANGE

Map pp62-5 Books

☎ 626 62 66; Kloveniersburgwal 58  
Near the university, this rabbit warren features four rooms of secondhand books, with temptingly priced occult, sci-fi and detective novels, many of them in English.

## NIJHOF & LEE

Map pp62-5 Books

☎ 620 39 80; [www.nijhoflee.nl](http://www.nijhoflee.nl); Staalstraat 13a; ☎ Tue-Sat  
Design fans will want to head here for a swell selection of international architecture, art and typography books and posters in an intimate but contemporary setting. One wall boasts a substantial selection of well-priced remainders.

## DE BEESTENWINKEL

Map pp62-5 Children's

☎ 623 18 05; Staalstraat 11; ☎ Tue-Sun  
From teeny tiny teddy bears to pink plastic pig snouts, this pleasantly crowded shop sells *de best* (best) of *de beesten* (animals). Other *bests*: plush toys from great toy-makers, lamps in animal shapes, and lots of plastic reptiles.

## KNUFFELS

Map pp62-5 Children's

☎ 623 06 32; St Antoniesbreestraat 39-51  
Avert the kids' eyes or they will be drawn by the irresistible force of bobbing mobiles

from the ceiling of this busy corner shop. Adults, too, may be drawn in by the soft toys, puppets, beautiful mobiles, teddies and jigsaw puzzles.

### RIELE Map pp62-5 Clothing & Accessories

☎ 623 34 08; St Antoniebreestraat 128; ☺ daily  
Fancy and edgy at the same time, this minimalist space lets the clothes do the talking. Designers include Ines Raspoort (Dutch), E Play (Italian), Tone Barker (Danish) and Ghost (British). Accent them with accessories from the Dutch designers Chick on a Mission.

### DROOG DESIGN

Map pp62-5 Design & Homewares

☎ 523 50 59; www.droogdesign.nl; Staalstraat 7b; ☺ noon-6pm Tue-Sun

A relative newcomer on the international design scene, this slick Amsterdam-based firm is already a market leader with inventions like the 85-lamp chandelier, the cow chair, and curtains with dress patterns. There are over 180 products by 100-plus designers.

### HENXS Map pp62-5 Fashion

☎ 638 94 78; http://shop.henxs.com; St Antoniebreestraat 136

The two tiny floors of this indie clothes store are crammed with fave labels of skaters and graffiti artists such as Hardcore, Bombers Best, Evisu and G-Star, along with graffiti supplies and edgy accessories.

### PUCCHINI BOMBONI Map pp62-5 Food

☎ 626 54 74; www.puccinibomboni.com; Staalstraat 17

We're not the only ones who go gaga over Puccini's large, handmade chocolate bonbons with rich fillings. Unforgettable chocolates include plum, marzipan or the calvados cup. There is another branch at Singel 184 (☎ 427 83 41). Note: shops have been known to close in warm weather – for the sake of the chocolates, of course.

### SEVENTYFIVE Map pp62-5 Shoes

☎ 626 46 11; Nieuwe Hoogstraat 24

At this true temple to trainers, stimulate your sports-shoe obsession with brands like Gola, Diesel, Everlast, Nike and Adidas. Naturally, Von Dutch makes an appearance too.

### 'T KLOMPENHUISJE Map pp62-5 Souvenirs

☎ 622 81 00; Nieuwe Hoogstraat 9a; ☺ Mon-Sat  
Reasonably priced and finely crafted, traditional Dutch clogs are just the thing to potter around the garden in, away from prying eyes. Good ones are surprisingly comfortable. There's also handmade leather goods and baby's woollen slippers.

### JOE'S VLIAGERWINKEL

Map pp62-5 Speciality Shop

☎ 625 01 39; Nieuwe Hoogstraat 19; ☺ Mon-Sat  
Whether you're after a kite for the kids that flies in nice patterns, or you're looking for something more exotic, head to this specialised kite shop where you can also buy build-it-yourself kits.

## JORDAAN

Shops here have an artsy, eclectic, home-made feel. The area around Elandsgracht is the place for art, particularly photography, and speciality shops from hats to cats. On Haarlemmerdijk, the extension of Haarlemmerstraat, lots of new shops have opened to pick up the overflow of shoppers.

### CLAIRE V Map p86 Accessories

☎ 421 90 00; www.clairv.nl; Prinsengracht 234f; ☺ Mon-Sat

The silk handbags, wraps and accessories embroidered with patterns and floral designs are gorgeous, but that's not the only reason they're worthy. Claire's wares are made at a training centre for Cambodian landmine victims, so by shopping here you'll look good and do good.

### ROCK ARCHIVE Map p86 Art

☎ 423 04 89; www.rockarchive.com; Prinsengracht 110; ☺ Wed-Sat

The whites are white and the blacks are black at this professional shop of limited-edition rock'n'roll prints. Robert Plant, Debbie Harry, Sting and tons of others are all there to be had for small change, in a format of your impeccable choice.

### JOSINE BOKHOVEN Map p86 Art & Antiques

☎ 623 65 98; www.galeriejosinebokhoven.nl; Prinsengracht 154

Across the canal from the Anne Frank Huis, this friendly gallery features contemporary art and the work of emerging young artists, including German artist Ralph Fleck.

### HUG GALLERY FOR INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY Map p86 Art Gallery

☎ 489 42 40; www.hughug.info; 1e Tuindwarsstraat 16

Small but important gallery that attracts some of the top names, especially from Britain. It's one of the few galleries that partners with photography museums like Huis Marseille (p95) and FOAM (p99).

### KLEURGAMMA Map p86 Art Gallery

☎ 423 05 03; Hazenstraat 51-55; ☺ Mon-Sat  
In this minimalist space you may find the work of some nearby photographers on the walls, or have your own prints processed. You'll feel better knowing that the Rijks and Van Gogh Museums get theirs done here too.

### TORCH GALLERY Map p86 Art Gallery

☎ 626 02 84; Lauriergracht 94; ☺ Thu-Sat  
Torch, one of Amsterdam's most cutting-edge galleries, is proud of its diverse selection. Around a dozen shows per year include photography and new media from many countries, and occasional painting and sculpture, from artists like Anton Corbijn (whose coverage of U2 was famous) and Annie Sprinkle.

### ENGLISH BOOKSHOP Map p86 Books

☎ 626 42 30; http://shop.englishbookshop.nl; Lauriergracht 71; ☺ Tue-Sun

This attractive, canal-side shop has a well-chosen selection of English-language biographies, novels and translations of the works of Dutch writers.

### FOTOGRAFIA Map p86 Books

☎ 639 39 39; 2e Laurierdwarstraat 60-64; ☺ Tue-Sat

This classy shop is as simple as a photo lab and stocked full of publications featuring the likes of Alfred Stieglitz, Charlotte Dumas, Rineke Dijkstra and Magritte.

### BROER & ZUS Map p86 Children's

☎ 422 90 02; www.broerenzus.nl; Rosengracht 94; ☺ Mon-Sat

Cosy little 'Bro & Sis' specialises in Dutch designers and fabrics for kids from birth to six years. You can get brands like Kidscase, tiny tops emblazoned with slogans like 'Mr Charming' and 'ladykiller', and wild prints (think Hawaiian shirts).

### MECHANISCH SPEELGOED

Map p86 Children's

☎ 638 16 80; Westerstraat 67; ☺ Mon, Tue, Thu-Sat

This fun shop is crammed full of nostalgic toys including snow-domes, glow-lamps, masks, finger puppets and wind-up toys. And who doesn't need a good rubber chicken every once in a while?

### EVA DAMAVE Map p86 Fashion

☎ 627 73 25; www.evadamave.nl; Lauriersdwarstraat 51c; ☺ Wed-Sat

Eva Damave creates funky woollen sweaters and zip jackets with her signature front patchwork panels made up of graphic cotton, silk and wool squares. She only produces one-offs or in small series, so you're unlikely to see anyone else wearing your woolly knit.

### DE BELLY Map p86 Food

☎ 330 94 83; Nieuwe Leliestraat 174

This organic supermarket, in the Jordaan for over three decades, has a great bakery and a small but smart selection of prepared foods, even organic tarts and chocolates.

### 'T ZONNETJE Map p86 Food

☎ 623 00 58; Haarlemmerdijk 45; ☺ Tue-Sat  
In a space that's been a teashop since 1642, you can find teas from all over the world, coffees and implements, and be waited on by a commendably cheerful owner. High tea is served upstairs (reserve for large groups).

### HET OUD-HOLLANDSCHE

SNOEPWINKELTJE Map p86 Food & Candy

☎ 420 73 90; Egelantiersdwarstraat 2

This corner shop is lined with jar after apothecary jar of Dutch penny candies with flavours from chocolate to coffee, all manner of fruit and the inscrutable, salty Dutch liquorice known as *drop*.

### ARNOLD CORNELIS Map p86 Food & Drink

☎ 625 85 85; Elandsgracht 78; ☺ Mon-Sat

Your dinner hosts will think you're in the know if you present them with something from this long-standing shop. Just a sample: marzipan fruits, chocolate bonbons with wasabi (it creeps up on you) and blue spheres made with Malaga wine. At lunch,

grab a flaky pastry filled with cheese, meat or vegetables. There is another branch at **Van Baerlestraat 93** (Map p110; ☎ 662 12 28).

### JG BEUNE Map p86 Food & Drink

☎ 624 83 56; Haarlemmerdijk 156-158  
This elegant sweet shop with original antique fittings has specialised in pastry and chocolate-making since 1882. Buy a box of delicious rich milk chocolates in the shape of *Amsterdammertjes*, the cast iron bollards around the city that protect you from traffic.

### GOLDSTRASSE Map p86 Jewellery

☎ 420 20 95; Elandsgracht 89; ☎ Wed-Sat  
Some 14 designers from the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and more exhibit here. One example is Amsterdam-based Marina Alexandre, a jewellery designer and teacher. You'll see rings in gold, silver and silicone. Fittingly, since many of the artists graduated from the Rietveld Academy, works here are more like wearable art.

### DISCOSTARS Map p86 Music

☎ 626 11 77; Haarlemmerdijk 86  
Both the disco generation and the 'disco sucks' generation will enjoy this repository of the music of yesteryear. If any of the names Olivia Newton-John, Engelbert Humperdinck, Paul Young, Celia Cruz, Candy Dulfer, Buddy Holly, Yves Montand, Doris Day or Roy Rogers mean anything to you, you'll find lots more to like.

### LA SAVONNERIE Map p86 Perfumes & Cosmetics

☎ 428 11 39; www.savonnerie.nl; Prinsengracht 294; ☎ Tue-Sun  
Aromatic Savonnerie makes more than 80 natural soaps on the premises, as well as stocking wonderful varieties from around the world – from rustic Aleppo olive-oil soap to gentle Belgian donkey-milk soap. There's an enormous range of loofahs, sponges, back-scrubbers and gift-packs.

### CATS & THINGS Map p86 Speciality Shop

☎ 428 30 28; Hazenstraat 26  
Head here when the cat (or cat-lover) back home deserves a souvenir. There's the expected assortment of kitty toys, sculptures, grooming needs, beds and climbers, but this shop proves that feline-themed

merchandise need not be kitschy and can even be cool.

### CHRISTODOULOU & LAMÉ Speciality Shop

Map p86  
☎ 320 22 69; Rozengracht 42  
Handwoven Tibetan silk pillows, velvet throws and hand-beaded saris from this treasure-trove of sumptuous soft furnishings will transform your home into a plush sanctuary. It's a real festival of colours.

### DE LACH Map p86 Speciality Shop

☎ 626 66 25; www.moviepostersdelach.com; 1e Bloemdwarsstraat 14; ☎ Tue, Thu-Sat  
This eccentric corner shop sells vintage movie posters from all over the world (eg the Italian version of *Some Like it Hot*) from €12 to €1000. There's a mini Walk of Fame, signed by Dutch stars, on the path outside.

### INTERNATIONAAL DESIGN CENTRUM Speciality Shop

Map p86  
☎ 521 87 10; Rozengracht 215-217; ☎ Tue-Sat  
Begun over a century ago, this shop has repped the forefront of Dutch design ever since – Gispen, Edra and Artifoot – and some foreign designers as well. Its affiliate, De Kasstoer (across the street), applies the same design concept to kitchens and lighting (towel hooks are simultaneously slick and cute).

### KITSCH KITCHEN Map p86 Speciality Shop

☎ 622 82 61; www.kitschkitchen.nl; Rozengracht 8-12  
You want it flowered, frilly, colourful, over the top or just made from plastic? Chances are you'll find it here – everything from handbags to homewares to kiddie toys and doll gowns. Plus lamps, Mexican tablecloths, pink plastic chandeliers from India and, of course, bouquets of plastic flowers.

### LA DIABLITA Map p86 Speciality Shop

☎ 06 1085 7333; Binnen Oranjestraat 11; ☎ Mon & Wed-Sat  
You've got a night on the town and need sparkly, spangly jewellery, gold sandals, yellow shoes or pink high-tops? This tiny storefront off the Haarlemmerdijk can help you. You say you need the same for your young daughter? They have a small selection for her too.

## top picks

### SHOPPING STRIPS TO WANDER

- **Albert Cuypmarkt (p118)** Soak up local colour, snap up exotic produce.
- **PC Hooftstraat (p109)** If you've got doubloons to spare, this street has the city's most high-end fashions.
- **Haarlemmerstraat (Map p92)** Head west to this up-and-coming street for the newest and coolest.
- **Negen Straatjes (p91)** Lose yourself in the 'Nine Alleys', where boutiques specialise in everything from clothing to art to tempting chocolates.
- **Spiegel Quarter (p107)** Hunt for antiques in this quarter in the Southern Canal Belt.

### NOU MOE STRIPWINKEL Speciality Shop

Map p86  
☎ 693 63 45; Lindenstraat 1  
This tiny corner shop features Asterix to Garfield, Tintin to 24 (yes, that 24). More importantly, it sells the merchandise: soft toys, notebooks, stickers, games, coffee mugs and bedroom slippers.

### PETSALON Map p86 Speciality Shop

☎ 624 73 85; www.petsalon.nl; Hazenstraat 3; ☎ Wed-Sat  
In Dutch a *pet* is a cap, and lifelong milliner Ans Wesseling has been designing hats from this shop since around 1990. One perennial favourite has an elaborately woven net down the back, which gives new meaning to letting your hair down. Step into his workshop and gasp.

### GALLERIA D'ARTE RINASCIMENTO Traditional Souvenirs

Map p86  
☎ 622 75 09; www.delft-art-gallery.com; Prinsengracht 170  
This pretty shop sells Royal Delftware ceramics (both antique and new), all manner of vases, platters, brooches, Christmas ornaments and interesting 19th-century wall tiles and plaques.

## WESTERN CANAL BELT

You could easily spend all of your shopping time in Amsterdam – indeed all your time in Amsterdam, period – in the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys) in the Canal Belt just east of the

Jordaan. The selection is arty, worthwhile and constantly changing, and lots of cafés mean plenty of break time.

### KLEIN ANTIK Map p92 Antiques

☎ 622 82 61; Gasthuismolensteeg 11; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat  
Tiles from tip to toe, including Delft blue, as well as Dutch pottery, some going back to medieval times. Don't expect great bargains (broken pieces sell from €25), but it's a lovely place to shop.

### NIC NIC Map p92 Antiques & Kitsch

☎ 622 85 23; www.nicnicdesign.com; Gasthuismolensteeg 5  
A trip here is like a visit to a gallery of 20th-century design. Cramped shelves take you from Art Deco to Bauhaus, googie, the '70s, *The Simpsons* and heaven knows what else.

### MENDO Map p92 Art & Antiques

☎ 612 12 15; Berenstraat 11; ☎ Wed-Sun  
The Mendo ad agency has opened this smart, black-walled gallery specialising in young Dutch painters. Works range from bright to disturbing-but-alluring. It also sells an intriguing selection of art, design, architecture and photography books.

### ARCHITECTURA & NATURA Books

Map p92  
☎ 623 61 86; www.architectura.nl; Leliegracht 22; ☎ Mon-Sat  
This charming canalside shop has art, architecture, design, landscape and coffee-table books. Upstairs, *Architectuurantiquariat Opbouw* (Architecture Antique Shop; ☎ 638 70 18) has a selection of its namesake.

### BOEKIE WOEKIE Map p92 Books

☎ 639 05 07; Berenstraat 16; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat  
While other shops handle art books, here they sell books *as art*, created by artists specifically for this medium. Some tell stories (elegantly illustrated, naturally), others are riffs on graphic motifs; you may want to browse for a long time.

### VAN RAVENSTEIN Map p92 Clothing

☎ 639 00 67; Keizersgracht 359  
Chic men and women shop here for upmarket Dutch and Belgian designers including Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester,



Dirk Bikkembergs, Martin Margiela and Viktor & Rolf.

### VOLKSBOND SHOP Map p92 Clothing

☎ 428 30 72; Haarlemmerstraat 146-148  
A relic from the days when Haarlemmerstraat was not so chic. Proceeds from sales of used clothing (most items €0.50 to €10) help finance facilities for the homeless: halfway houses, counselling services and the like.

### SKINS COSMETICS Map p92 Cosmetics

☎ 528 69 22; www.skins.nl; Runstraat 9  
The Netherlands' exclusive importer of special brands of fragrances, cosmetics and skin-care and beauty products: think Aesop, Dyptique, Etro, Laura Mercier and the Art of Shaving. They also do makeup sessions and facials.

### FROZEN FOUNTAIN

Map p92 Design & Homewares

☎ 622 93 75; www.frozenfountain.nl; Prinsengracht 629; ☎ Mon-Sat

The city's best-known showcase of furniture and interior design. Prices are not cheap, but wares are offbeat and very memorable (designer pen-knives, kitchen gadgets).

### BE INNOCENT Map p92 Fashion

☎ 320 59 87; Oude Spiegelstraat 9  
Style-savvy fashionistas will be familiar with these Victorian Gothic-inspired frilly baby-doll dresses from the elegant Gothic Lolita look of the Japanese Harajuku subculture. Although it took off in Japan in the '90s, its recent appropriation by Gwen Stefani is now popularising it in the West.

### EXOTA Map p92 Fashion

☎ 620 91 02; www.exota.com; Hartenstraat 10  
Head here for hip gear from indie labels such as King Louie and Aem Kei to global brands such as Kookai and French Connection. Also has kitsch accessories such as kooky dolly bags by local designer Olga Harbidge.

### FATES Map p92 Fashion

☎ 624 05 00; Herenstraat 19  
Modern fashion accessories made of natural materials, from fair-trade studios in India and Southeast Asia. We were particularly

taken with the groovy tulip-shaped bags from Bali, diaphanous silk shawls and freshwater pearl necklaces.

### LADY DAY Map p92 Fashion

☎ 623 58 20; Hartenstraat 9  
This is the premier location for unearthing spotless vintage clothes from Holland and elsewhere. The leather jackets, swingin' 1960s and '70s wear, and woollen sailors' coats are well-priced winners. There are also some men's suits and new shoes.

### LAURA DOLS Map p92 Fashion

☎ 624 90 66; www.lauradols.nl; Wolvenstraat 7  
Compulsive style-watchers head to this vintage-clothing store for fur coats, 1920s beaded dresses, lace blouses and '40s movie-star accessories like hand-stitched leather gloves.

### LOCAL SERVICE Map p92 Fashion

☎ 620 86 38; Keizersgracht 400-402  
Media types (male at 400; female at 402) hunt here for the latest Paul Smith (Amsterdam's exclusive dealer for his main line), and the Ghost, Stone Island and Dreikorn collections.

### MIAUW Map p92 Fashion

☎ 422 05 61; www.miau.com; Hartenstraat 36  
Analiik is one of Amsterdam's edgiest young designers. Her latest enterprise, Miauw, is a showcase for her idiosyncratic collections, and likeminded labels such as Preen, Karen Walker, Kokon to Zai, and Henrick Vibskof. It also has changing exhibitions of graphic, media, graffiti and conceptual art.

### URI DURI Map p92 Fashion

☎ 422 94 57; Huidenstraat 30  
South Korean An-Su Kim's tiny boutique stocks funky little dresses (little being the key word) in retro fabrics that she designs and her mother and sister sew up in Seoul. These sassy numbers you won't find elsewhere are teensy – but they're worth dieting for.

### ZIPPER Map p92 Fashion

☎ 623 73 02; Huidenstraat 7  
Amsterdam hipsters head here for seriously nostalgic, retro secondhand gear – wacky printed shirts, stovepipe jeans, '40s zoot suits, porkpie hats and the like.

### MEEUWIG & ZN Map p92 Food

☎ 626 52 86; Haarlemmerstraat 70; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Fill your own bottle from metal crocks containing over 50 types of olive oil from around the world. You'll also find bottles of gourmet vinegar, mustard, chutney and fresh olives.

### UNLIMITED DELICIOUS Map p92 Food

☎ 622 48 29; Haarlemmerstraat 122  
Is it ever! It's tempting to dive into the gorgeous, sculptural cakes and tarts, but – if you can – walk past them to the dozens of varieties of chocolates made in-house. Some of the more outlandish combinations (that somehow work) are rosemary sea salt, caramel cayenne and Laphroaig whisky. More standard choices include coffee, nougat and our favourite: Ceylon cinnamon.

### DE KAASKAMER Map p92 Food & Drink

☎ 623 34 83; Runstraat 7  
A small shop with 440 cheeses from around Europe and Holland, and deli items like pâté, cured meats and baguettes. At lunch time it does a roaring sandwich trade.

### URBAN PICNIC Map p92 Food & Drink

☎ 320 88 66; www.urbanpicnic.net; Oude Spiegelstraat 4  
Everything you need for a picnic in the park or a snack for the train: baskets, plasticware, paper goods, nifty biodegradable wooden utensils and, oh yes, the food, like sandwiches of smoked Irish salmon with horse-radish cream, or lamb sausage with mustard mayo.

### NIEUWS Map p92 Gag Gifts

☎ 627 95 40; Prinsengracht 89  
A mind-boggling array of kooky trinkets cram this entertaining store – from quirky action figures (we love the Crazy Cat Lady, the Obsessive Compulsive, Rosie the Riveter and Albine Bowler!) to mini patron saints, foreplay dice and voodoo dolls. Travellers love the Wash Away Your Sins soap.

### GAMEKEEPER Map p92 Games

☎ 638 15 79; Hartenstraat 14  
The selection of board games is dizzying, as is the imagination that went into making them. Start with checkers, chess and mah jong, and move on to Cathedral (build a city in the style of the Great Wall of China or the souk in Marrakech) or Rush Hour (help

a car get out of traffic). 'Cooperative' games encourage players to play with, not against, each other.

### BEADIES Map p92 Jewellery

☎ 428 51 61; Huidenstraat 6  
Once the funky jewellery in the window draws you in, you'll find yourself here for hours selecting gorgeous beads, gems, charms and trinkets to design your own necklaces and bracelets. Our advice: don't start from scratch, opt for a variation on Beadies' fab designs.

### ZINNE & MINNE Map p92 Sex Shop

☎ 330 34 82; Wolvenstraat 89  
Women won't find this sensual store the least bit intimidating and its lovely owner, Inez Reijbroek, is happy to help or leave to browse. Try Geisha's Secrets, with essential love oils and tickle feathers, or the Kamasutra Bedside Box with honey dust and massage oil.

### ANTONIA BY YVETTE Map p92 Shoes

☎ 627 24 33; www.antonibyyvette.nl; Gasthuismolensteeg 12  
If *Sex and the City* was shot in Amsterdam, we bet that the girls would spend half their time in this shop. Shoes, boots, sandals and espadrilles run from supremely classy to just plain fun. There's also a small section for guys.

### HESTER VAN EEGHEN Map p92 Shoes

☎ 626 92 11; www.hestervaneeghen.com; Hartenstraat 1; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat  
Designed in Amsterdam and handcrafted in Italy from fine leather, internationally renowned Hester van Eeghen's unique shoes are for those who dare to dress their feet dramatically in bright colours, fur suede, and geometric patterns and prints. Her handbags are just as attention-grabbing.

### AMSTERDAM WATCH COMPANY

Map p92 Speciality Shop

☎ 389 27 89; www.amsterdamwatchcompany.nl; Hartenstraat 4; ☎ Tue-Sat  
A husband and wife team of watchmakers restore old watches (postwar to mid-1970s) and are the exclusive Amsterdam dealers of such brands as Germany's D Dornblüth and the Dutch Christiaan van der Klaauw, who makes fewer than 200 watches a year.

**BRILMUSEUM** Map p92 Speciality Shop

☎ 421 24 14; [www.brilmuseumamsterdam.nl](http://www.brilmuseumamsterdam.nl); Gasthuismolensteeg 7; ☎ Wed-Sat  
This long-standing shop is an institution, both for its wares and its presentation. You can take in the 700-year history of eyeglasses as well as a very 21st-century collection, some of which is pretty outlandish.

**DE WITTE TANDEN WINKEL**Map p92 Speciality Shop

☎ 623 34 43; Runstraat 5  
We love shops that are obsessed, and 'The White-Teeth Shop' certainly is – with dental hygiene. There's a huge selection of toothbrushes, toothpastes from around the world, brushing accessories you never knew you needed and friendly advice.

**SANTA JET** Map p92 Speciality Shop

☎ 427 20 70; Prinsenstraat 7  
Forgot to pack your love potion? Or fresh out of prayer candles? The interior's vivid colours alone are worth a visit to this quirky shop, as are the Mexican shrines, religious icons and Day of the Dead paraphernalia.

**EPISODE** Map p92 Vintage Clothing

☎ 626 46 19; [www.episode.eu](http://www.episode.eu); Berenstraat 1  
Visiting rock stars head to Episode to trawl through two floors of fabulous vintage and secondhand gear. Most impressive when we last dropped in were the seemingly endless racks of 1970s suede coats, folkly peasant blouses, colourful ponchos and big, bright plastic sunshades.

**SOUTHERN CANAL BELT**

From sleek Dutch fashion and design to colourful bouquets and rare Dutch *jenever*s, the variety of goods on offer in the Southern Canal Belt is nothing short of staggering. The Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (aka the Spiegel Quarter) is celebrated for its antique stores, bric-a-brac collectibles, tribal and oriental art, and commercial art galleries.

**CITYBOEK** Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 627 03 49; [www.cityboek.nl](http://www.cityboek.nl); Kerkstraat 211; ☎ by appt  
We normally don't write up shops selling souvenir posters, but this small publishing house is an exception, with precisely drawn, multicoloured, architecturally

faithful prints, books and postcards of Amsterdam's canalscapes (eg images of the entire Herengracht or Singel).

**DECORATIVA** Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 320 10 93; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 9a  
An amazing jumble of European antiques, collectables and weird vintage gifts fills this large space. Look up and you'll even see paintings on the ceilings.

**EDUARD KRAMER**Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 623 08 32; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 64  
Specialising in antique Dutch wall and floor tiles, glass and silver, Eduard Kramer is bursting with vintage homewares.

**EH ARIËNS KAPPERS**Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 623 53 56; [www.masterprints.nl](http://www.masterprints.nl); Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 32  
This pretty gallery stocks original prints, etchings, engravings, lithographs, maps from the 15th to 20th centuries, and Japanese woodblock prints.

**JASKI** Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 620 39 39; [www.jaski.nl](http://www.jaski.nl); Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 27-29  
This large, commercial gallery sells paintings, prints, ceramics and sculptures by some of the most famous members of the CoBRA movement (see p36).

**LIEVE HEMEL** Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 623 00 60; [www.lievehemel.nl](http://www.lievehemel.nl); Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 3  
You'll find magnificent contemporary Dutch realist painting and sculpture at this smart gallery. It shows works by Dutch painters Ben Snijders and Theo Voorzaat, and astounding, lifelike representations of clothing – hewn from wood – by Italian Livio de Marchi.

**REFLEX MODERN ART GALLERY**Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 627 28 32; [www.reflex-art.nl](http://www.reflex-art.nl); Weteringschans 79a; ☎ Tue-Sat  
This prominent gallery, opposite the Rijksmuseum, is filled with contemporary art and photography, including works by members of the CoBRA and the Nouveau Réaliste movements.

**REFLEX NEW ART GALLERY**Map pp100-1 Art & Antiques

☎ 423 54 23; [www.reflex-art.nl](http://www.reflex-art.nl); Weteringschans 83; ☎ Tue-Sat  
This new branch specialising in new art is across the street from the original Reflex. There's an emphasis on photography, and artists include young up-and-comers like David La Chapelle, Robin Lowe, Roger Bal-len, Larry Sultan and Nobuyoshi Araki.

**GALERIE LAMBIEK** Map pp100-1 Books

☎ 626 75 43; [www.lambiek.nl](http://www.lambiek.nl); Kerkstraat 78; ☎ daily  
Serious collectors of comics will lose themselves amid tens of thousands of titles of Dutch and worldwide comic-book art. Crumb, Avril and Herriman are just the tip of the 4000-plus author iceberg.

**INTERNATIONAL THEATRE & FILM BOOKS** Map pp100-1 Books

☎ 622 64 89; Leidseplein 26; ☎ Mon-Sat  
In the Stadschouwburg building, this excellent shop is crammed with books on its namesake subjects, as well as special-ity sections on, for example, musicals and famous directors. The majority of titles are in English.

**SELEXYZ SCHELTEMA** Map pp100-1 Books

☎ 523 14 11; Koningsplein 20  
The largest bookshop in town is a true department store, with many foreign titles and New Age and multimedia sections. It can be dizzying. Readings and book launches take place next to the upstairs café

**CARL DENIG**Map pp100-1 Camping, Outdoor & Sport

☎ 626 24 36; Weteringschans 113-115; ☎ Tue-Sat  
Opened in 1912, this is Amsterdam's oldest and best outdoor retailer, though you pay for the quality. There are five floors of packs, tents, hiking and camping accessories, snowboards and skis.

**TINKERBELL** Map pp100-1 Children's

☎ 625 88 30; Spiegelgracht 10; ☎ Mon-Sat  
The mechanical bear blowing bubbles outside this shop fascinates kids, as do the intriguing technical and scientific toys inside. You'll also find historical costumes, plush toys and an entire section for babies.

**SPOILED** Map pp100-1 Clothing

☎ 626 38 18; Leidsestraat 27  
At this one-stop urban-lifestyle store you'll find labels like Mads Norgaard, Rare, Junk De Luxe, Skunk Funk, True Religion, Stella Nova, My Ass, Fred Perry, Tommy Hilfiger and Tiger of Sweden, along with stylish shoes and accessories, cool magazines and art. You can also throw back an espresso and get your hair cut.

**YOUNG DESIGNERS UNITED** Clothing

Map pp100-1  
☎ 626 9191; [www.ydu.nl](http://www.ydu.nl); Keizersgracht 447  
Angelika Groenendijk Wasylewski's boutique is a showcase for young Dutch designers. Check out Suzanne de Jager and Natasja Leenders' bold and playful Guten Appetit label, Heidi Long's striking collection, Marjoleine Innemeë's Asian-inspired Minnemeë, Ester Peters' fun Kinky Dream Wear, sexy Amber Rose, and Sarid Khomnoy's extravagant Amm Couture.

**BEBOB DESIGN** Design & Homewares

Map pp100-1  
☎ 624 57 63; [www.bebob.nl](http://www.bebob.nl); Prinsengracht 764  
Lovers of international 20th-century design classics – from Arne Jacobsen Swan chairs to Isamu Noguchi lampshades – should make this their first stop in Amsterdam. While the store arranges shipping, a George Nelson ball clock should fit nicely in the carry-on.

**CORA KEMPERMAN** Map pp100-1 Fashion

☎ 625 12 84; Leidsestraat 72  
Kemperman was once a designer with large Dutch fashion houses, but since 1995 she's been working on her own empire – now encompassing nine stores, including three in Belgium. Her creations feature floaty, layered separates and dresses in linen, cotton and wool.

**HANA ZUKI** Map pp100-1 Fashion

☎ 422 95 63; Vijzelstraat 87  
Local designers started this funky boutique-come-studio as a showcase for their creations and those of their friends. Check out Hana Zuki's own graphic fashion, hip Aiko label, and edgy Phatoak by Dutch Natasja van den Elzen, along with illustrations, magazines, Lomos, and Maomaland's handmade toys.

**LOOK OUT** Map pp100-1

Fashion

☎ 625 50 32; [www.lookoutmode.com](http://www.lookoutmode.com);  
Utrechtsestraat 91 & 93

Looking through the racks at these wonderful neighbouring men's and women's stores is a real delight. Look out for super stylish labels such as Paul Smith, Philosophy, Etro, Kenzo, Bruuns Bazaar and Annie Verbeke.

**DESHIMA** Map pp100-1

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 625 75 13; Weteringschans 65; ☹ Mon-Sat  
Downstairs, Deshima is a health-food store with all sorts of macrobiotic products, but upstairs there's a lovely selection of prepared foods (plates from €8.50 to €10.50) and a few seats for eating in. Try the salads and cooked veggies, cakes and tarts.

**EICHHOLTZ** Map pp100-1

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 622 03 05; Leidsestraat 48  
This small deli is bursting with everything homesick Brits and Americans yearn for, such as Oreo cookies, Betty Crocker cake mix, Heinz baked beans, peanut butter (Skippy, Jif or Peter Pan!), HP sauce and Bird's custard.

**HART'S WIJNHANDEL**

Map pp100-1

Food &amp; Drink

☎ 623 83 50; Vijzelgracht 27; ☹ Tue-Sat  
Listen to classical music as you peruse the large selection of *jenever*s and French and Italian wines at this peaceful shop. It's been around since 1880, and supplies many a local restaurant with top tittle.

**CONCERTO** Map pp100-1

Music

☎ 623 52 28; Utrechtsestraat 52-60  
Most excellent. This rambling shop, spread over several buildings, has Amsterdam's best selection of new and secondhand CDs and records; you could spend hours

on end browsing in here. It's often cheap, always interesting and has good listening facilities.

**GET RECORDS** Map pp100-1

Music

☎ 622 34 41; Utrechtsestraat 105

This deceptively large store has an eclectic and wide range of rock, folk, country and blues CDs. It's a decent break from the club music scene.

**SHOEBALOO** Map pp100-1

Shoes

☎ 626 79 93; [www.shoebaloo.nl](http://www.shoebaloo.nl); Leidsestraat 10  
We like the chic shoes here: imports like Fendi, Helmut Lang, Miu Miu and Prada Sport, and the less expensive, but just as wearable, house label. The branch at **PC Hoofstraat 80** (Map p116; ☎ 671 33 10) has one of our favourite interiors in town: imagine a giant spaceship-green tanning bed lined with shoe shelves and eggs for you to sit on.

**CONSCIOUS DREAMS**

Map pp100-1

Smart Drugs

☎ 626 69 07; [www.consciousdreams.nl](http://www.consciousdreams.nl); Kerkstraat 119

You can enhance whatever needs enhancing at Amsterdam's original smart shop, founded in 1993. The enthusiastic staff can explain everything about trippy herbs, extracts and cacti. There's a small but excellent book section, club-night flyers and internet facilities.

**BLOEMENMARKT** Map pp100-1

Souvenirs

Singel; ☹ closed Sun winter

It's hard to resist the quivering tulips at Amsterdam's signature flower market, near Muntplein. Once you've chosen your 10lb bag of Burning Heart or Queen of Night bulbs, ask the traders if you can take it back home. Ireland and the UK allow an unlimited number of bulbs to be brought

**WHERE TO GET YOUR GROOVE ON**

If club music is your thing, you can swing, sway and swap notes with knowledgeable locals at these shops. The chill cat next to you at the listening booth may be spinning for you that night. Here are just a few of the joints we tested (also supreme for the latest club and dance-fest info):

**Back Beat Records** (Map p86; ☎ 627 16 57; Egelantierstraat 19)

**Boudisque** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 623 26 93; Haringpakkerssteeg 10-18)

**Killa Cutz** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 428 40 40; Nieuwe Nieuwstraat 19d)

**Rush Hour Records** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 427 45 05; Spuistraat 98)

**Wax Well Records** (Map p92; ☎ 528 68 80; Gasthuismolensteeg 6a)

**MARKET WATCH**

No visit to Amsterdam is complete if you haven't experienced one or more of its lively markets. The following are merely a selection. Watch out for pickpockets.

- **Alberts Cuyppmarkt** (p118) Exotic goods as well as cheap basics from nations around the globe.
- **Antiques markets** Nieuwmarkt (Map pp62-5; ☹ 9am-5pm Sun May-Sep); Amstelveid (Map pp100-1; ☹ 9am-6pm last Fri of the month in warmer months) There are many genuine articles here and lots of books and bric-a-brac.
- **Art markets** (☹ 10.30am-6pm Sun Mar-Oct) Thorbeckeplein (Map pp100-1); Spui (Map pp62-5) These quiet markets, dealing in mostly modern pictorial art, are a bit too modest in scope to yield real finds.
- **Bloemenmarkt** (opposite) Amsterdam's signature flower market.
- **Boerenmarkt** (Farmers' Market; ☹ 10am-3pm Sat) Noordermarkt (Map p86); Nieuwmarkt (Map pp62-5) Pick up home-grown produce, organic foods and picnic provisions.
- **Book market** (Map pp62-5; Oudemanhuispoort; ☹ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri) In the old arcade between Oudezijds Achterburgwal and Kloveniersburgwal (blink and you'll miss either entrance), this is the place to find that 19th-century copy of *Das Kapital* or a semantic analysis of Icelandic sagas, and some newer books and art prints. Another book market takes place on the Spui (Map pp62-5; ☹ 8am-6pm Fri).
- **De Looier antiques market** (Map p86; ☎ 624 90 38; Elandsgracht 109; ☹ 11am-5pm Sat-Thu) Indoor stalls selling jewellery, furniture, art and collectibles.
- **Lindengracht market** (Map p86; Lindengracht; ☹ 11am-4pm Sat) General market, very much a local affair.
- **Noordermarkt** (Map p86; Noorderstraat; ☹ 9am-1pm Tue, 9am-6pm Sat) This Jordaan market has a split personality: Tuesdays are for antiques, fabrics and secondhand bric-a-brac, while Saturdays see a delightful farmers market with organic produce.
- **Plant market** (Map pp100-1; Amstelveid; ☹ 3-6pm Mon Easter-Christmas) All sorts of living green things, pots and vases are sold here.
- **Stamp & coin market** (Map pp62-5; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 280; ☹ 10am-4pm Wed & Sat) This little street-side market, just south of Wijdesteeg, sells stamps, coins and medals.
- **Waterlooplein flea market** (Map pp62-5; Waterlooplein; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm Sat) Amsterdam's most famous flea market is full of curios, secondhand clothing, music, electronic stuff slightly on the blink, hardware and cheap New Age gifts.
- **Westermarkt** (Map p86; Westerstraat; ☹ 9am-1pm Mon) Cheapish clothes and textiles, some real bargains.

back in, as do Canada and the USA (accompanied by a certificate, which will be provided). Japan permits up to 100 certified bulbs, while Australia and New Zealand have banned the importation of bulbs altogether.

**AURORA KONTAKT**

Map pp100-1

Speciality Shop

☎ 623 40 62; Vijzelstraat 27-35

If your favourite electronic or computer gizmo has stopped working, this no-nonsense store can sell you a replacement at competitive prices.

**MARAÑON HANGMATTEN**

Map pp100-1

Speciality Shop

☎ 622 59 38; [www.maranon.com](http://www.maranon.com); Singel 488

Anyone who loves hanging around should come here and explore Europe's largest selection of hammocks. The colourful creations, made of everything from cotton to pineapple fibres, are for everyone from

adults to babies, and are made by many producers from indigenous weavers to large manufacturers.

**VLIEGER** Map pp100-1

Speciality Shop

☎ 623 58 34; Amstel 34

Since 1869 this two-storey shop has been supplying paper to Amsterdam, and not just any paper: Egyptian papyrus; lush handmade papers from Japan, India, Nepal and Guatemala; papers inlaid with flower petals or bamboo; and paper textured to look like snake skin.

**HEINEN DELFTWARE**

Map pp100-1

Traditional Souvenirs

☎ 627 82 99; [www.heinen-delftware.nl](http://www.heinen-delftware.nl);  
Prinsengracht 440

With four floors of Delftware, all the major factories are represented and all budgets catered for (spend about €4 for a spoon, €2600-plus for a replica 17th-century tulip vase).



## CHAINS WILL KEEP US TOGETHER

Some shops have several locations around town. For chocolates and ice cream, look out for **Australian Homemade** Leidsestraat 101 (Map pp100-1); Singel 437 (Map pp62-5). Albert Heijn is a ubiquitous chain of general supermarkets, while Blokker sells simple homewares. Personal-care products can be found at any **Etos store** Nieuwendijk 69 (Map pp62-5); Nieuwendijk 182 (Map pp62-5); Leidsestraat 82 (Map pp100-1); Overtoom 77 (Map p116). **Gall & Gall** (Map pp62-3; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 226a) should fill all your wine and liquor needs; outlets are also found within most branches of Albert Heijn supermarkets.

## OLD SOUTH

The real concentration of shops is around the PC Hoofstraat, which teems with brands that need no introduction: Hugo Boss, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, JA Henckels, Louis Vuitton, Mont Blanc, Zegna and more. Across the Vondelpark, Overtoom has furniture and home-design stores as well as secondhand shops.

### DE WINKEL VAN NIJNTJE

**Map p110** Children's  
☎ 671 97 07; Beethovenstraat 71; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Dutch illustrator Dick Bruna's most famous character, Miffy ('Nijntje' in Dutch), is celebrated in toys and kids' merchandise. Items range from pencils and soap bubbles to note pads, mouse pads, books, plush toys, clothing and playhouses, to Royal Delftware plates.

### XSMALL

**Map p110** Children's  
☎ 470 26 00; www.xsmall.nl; Van Baerlestraat 108; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Outfitting the moppets of the Old South with toys and extra-cute clothes for kids aged 0 to 10. They can also create digital portraits in Andy Warhol style, from your own digital photo of your little darling (from €45).

### DE WATERWINKEL

**Map p110** Food & Drink  
☎ 675 59 32; Roelof Hartstraat 10  
Thirsty? With over 100 types of bottled water (mineral, sparkling, still and flavoured), this calm and pretty store will keep your juices flowing.

## BROEKMANS & VAN POPPEL

**Map p110** Music  
☎ 679 65 75; www.broekmans.com; Van Baerlestraat 92-94; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Near the Concertgebouw (surprise!), it's the city's top choice for classical and popular sheet music, as well as music books. Head to the 1st floor for a comprehensive selection from the Middle Ages through to classical and contemporary.

## LAIRESSE APOTHEEK

**Map p110** Pharmacy  
☎ 662 10 22; De Lairessestraat 40hs; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Both a pharmacy and installation art, with graphics of the periodic table filling the entrance and a rotunda of green backlit cases inside.

## VONDELPARK & AROUND

The winding paths of the Vondelpark must inspire a certain wanderlust because the nearby streets are full of outdoor and travel gear shops. You're in capable hands: Holland has produced more than its fair share of world adventurers. Stroll down Overtoom and return equipped to tackle something more strenuous than a canal-boat tour.

### PIED À TERRE

**Map p116** Books  
☎ 627 44 55; Overtoom 135  
The galleried, skylit interior of this classy travel-book shop feels like a Renaissance centre of learning. It specialises in pretty much any book you'll need for outdoor pursuits: hiking and cycling tomes, topographical maps and travel guides.

### BEVER ZWERFSPORT

**Map p116** Camping, Outdoor & Sport  
☎ 689 46 39; Stadhouderskade 4; ☎ Mon-Sat  
Everything you need for a local hike or a Himalayan expedition: camping equipment, mountaineering gear, clothes and shoes.

### WOMEN'S OUTDOOR WORLD

**Map p116** Camping, Outdoor & Sport  
☎ 412 28 79; Overtoom 51-53  
Owned by Bever, one of the city's leading sporting-equipment shops, the WOW had to open a separate shop due to overwhelming

demand. It also sells nongender-specific equipment (eg tents).

## MEVIUS & ITALIAANDER

**Map p116** Speciality Shop  
☎ 618 02 56; Overtoom 21-25  
This shop doesn't have a lot of street presence, but it's cavernous where it counts (in the back) and loaded with the unexpected: old posters and dishes from faraway lands, new espresso pots and used LPs, furniture and lamps. Prices start at €0.50.

## DE PIJP

Most shoppers in De Pijp seem to be at the Albert Cuypmarkt (p118), and with good reason. It's block after block of clothing, food and homewares, reasonably priced. More than that, it's where the city comes together: from the most recent immigrant to the Queen (locals are still talking about how she shopped here for the market's 100th birthday in 2005 – and ran out of money).

### FIETSFABRIEK

**Map p119** Bicycles  
☎ 672 18 34; www.fietsfabriek.nl; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 12; ☎ Tue-Sun  
Wessel van den Bosch trained as an architect, and now he makes custom bicycles from this wild 'n' crazy workshop, one of several in Amsterdam. Come in and pick up a *bakfiets* (cargo bike), a *familiefiets* (with covered 'pram') or even a standard *Omafiets* (one-gear city bike). Just browsing is a joy.

### STADSBOEKWINKEL

**Map p119** Books  
☎ 251 15 10; Vijzelstraat 32; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun  
Run by the city printer, this is the best source for books about Amsterdam's history, urban development, ecology and politics. Most titles are in Dutch (but you can always look at the pictures) – you'll also find some in English. It's in the City Archives building.

### YOI

**Map p119** Fashion  
☎ 670 55 40; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 27; ☎ Tue-Sun  
This 'hip honest guerrilla store' sells Dutch fashion produced with respect for humans, animals and the environment, made from organic cotton, hemp, secondhand clothes, recycled parachutes and prison blankets.

Labels include fair-trade threads by Fuck the Fashion, Lazy One, and This is a Story by Meike Beckers.

### DE EMAILLEKEIZER

**Map p119** Home Wares  
☎ 664 18 47; 1e Sweelinkstraat 15; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Sat  
*Email* sounds like something you want to send, but in Dutch it means 'enamel', so it's something you'll want to keep. This colourful store brims with it: metal tableware and more coated in interesting designs from China, Ghana, Poland etc.

### STENELUX

**Map p119** Speciality Shop  
☎ 662 14 90; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 2; ☎ Thu-Sat  
Buy an old fossil for that old fossil you left back home. Stenelux has a smart collection from this world and beyond (including meteorites).

## PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

If you've come to Amsterdam to have a new interior put in your multimillion-dollar yacht, the dockyards out here will hit the spot. Other shoppers come for the renowned deli or maker of custom-made boxes. The pierside cafés make a great place to unwrap your booty.

### FRANK'S SMOKEHOUSE

**Map p122** Food & Drink  
☎ 670 07 74; www.smokehouse.nl; Wittenburger Gracht 303  
Frank is a prime supplier to Amsterdam's restaurants. He learned how to smoke fish from the Swedes, and his excellent Alaska salmon, halibut and yellowfin tuna can be vacuum packed for easy passage through airport customs (which works, unlike with meat).

### DE ODE

**Map p122** Speciality Shop  
☎ 419 08 82; Levantkade 51, KNSM Is; ☎ by appt only  
Here you can find a final resting place with a difference: a bookcase that converts in to a coffin when you join the library in the sky, or a coffin on wheels with bicycle towbar – perfect for pedalling friends to their last bike rack.

## DIAMONDS

Amsterdam has been a diamond centre since Sephardic Jews introduced the cutting industry in the 1580s. The Cullinan, the largest diamond ever found (3106 carats), was split into more than 100 stones here in 1908, after which the master cutter spent three months recovering from stress. A large oval diamond cut here, known as the Koh-i-Noor (Mountain of Light), was acquired by Queen Victoria and now forms part of the British crown jewels.

The four diamond factories listed below offer guided tours, but the Gassan tour is probably the most enlightening. Tours are free and usually run 9am to 5pm daily.

Diamonds aren't necessarily cheaper in Amsterdam than elsewhere, but between the tours and extensive descriptions and factory offers, you'll know what you're buying.

**Amstel Diamonds** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 623 14 79; Amstel 206-208)

**Amsterdam Diamond Center** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 624 57 87; Rokin 1)

**Coster Diamonds** (Map p110; ☎ 305 55 55; Paulus Potterstraat 2-6)

**Gassan Diamonds** (p79; ☎ 622 53 33; Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173-175)

## OUTER DISTRICTS

**SO DUTCH FASHION** Map pp58-9 Clothing

☎ 617 09 57; [www.dutchfashionfoundation.com](http://www.dutchfashionfoundation.com); 2 World Fashion Centre, Wilhelminaplein 13, Tower 1, fl 13; 🕒 Mon-Fri

The Dutch Fashion Foundation promotes the best of Dutch fashion and helps

designers develop their labels into commercial brands. Its showroom at the World Fashion Centre provides *haute couture* ateliers and carries collections by the hottest Dutch designers, such as Mada van Gaans, Jan Taminiau, Bas Kusters and Percy Irausquin.

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**BLUELIST**<sup>1</sup> (blu,list) v.  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## EATING

### top picks

- **De Burgermeester** (p173)  
The best burgers for discriminating burghers.
- **Blauw aan de Wal** (p160)  
A rose among thorns in the Red Light District.
- **Bordewijk** (p161)  
French & Italian lessons for picky palates.
- **Hemelse Modder** (p161)  
Dutch culinary haven with heavenly mousse.
- **Le Petit Latin** (p159)  
Formidable fish with Jacques' lovely southern accents.
- **Piet de Leeuw** (p168)  
Tender steak and fab *frites* since 1900.
- **Ristorante d'Antica** (p166)  
Watch pasta spin in a wheel of cheese.
- **Supper Club** (p158)  
Mattress dining with a flair for the dramatic.
- **Tujuh Maret** (p167)  
The many side dishes of life: Indonesian rice table.
- **Van Vlaanderen** (p166)  
French eatery reaching for the Michelin stars.



Dutch cuisine used to be little more than a contradiction in terms. This harks back to the days when Holland's hard-working merchants saw spices, coffee and cheese more as tradable commodities than something to be enjoyed. The leading Dutch restaurant critic, Johannes van Dam, recently went so far as to say the Dutch would eat anything if it were well presented ('if it had a bow on it').

Seriously, and take it from someone who lived here for years, it's not as bad as all that. A memorable meal awaits if you know where to look. And a major delight is the huge choice of cuisine, including delicacies from the former colonies. (When in Amsterdam, you have to eat an Indonesian rice table – it's the law.)

Another great joy is the visual flair of Amsterdam's restaurants. From the sumptuous interiors of supper clubs to pint-sized designer cafés, you can feast your eyes as well as your stomach.

Restaurants who care will change their menus seasonally, if not daily. Where we have listed individual dishes, they're either always on the menu or a reference to give you a line on the chef's creativity. Most places will have a few vegetarian choices.

Last but not least, don't forget about traditional Dutch cooking. While not exactly refined, with good honest dishes like *hutspot* (hotchpotch) it can be delicious.

## SPECIALITIES

You'll find all colours in the rainbow, but Italian, French, Thai and Chinese are so widespread they're practically seen as national cuisines. Spanish-style tapas are all the rage, as is sushi, Pacific-Rim fusion and wok/noodle shops. Dutch chefs fly the flag highest at nouveau cuisine and fish restaurants, but there are also grease vendors like Febo (see the boxed text, p169).

In the De Pijp district, Indian and Turkish eateries are as common as one-speed bicycles, plus there are cuisines you may never have heard of, like Surinamese, a pleasant surprise. Chinese is always a good bet, particularly in the little Chinatown near the Zeedijk.

## Dutch

Traditional Dutch cuisine revolves around meat, potato and vegetables. That said, contemporary chefs have made some great strides, and what's now called 'Dutch' often has echoes of far-off, mystical lands.

Some typical dishes include *stamppot* (mashed pot) – potatoes mashed with vegetables (usually kale or endive) and served with smoked sausage or strips of pork. *Hutspot*, similar to *stamppot* but with carrots, onions and braised meat, is a popular winter dish. *Erwtensoepp* is a thick pea soup (a spoon stuck upright in the pot should fall over slowly) with smoked sausage and bacon.

Year-round favourites include *broodjes* (filled sandwiches). Quality *broodjeswinkels*

(sandwich shops) are like elaborate delis. Pile hot or cold ingredients onto a choice of breads and rolls, from roast beef or fish salads to cheeses and *osseworst* (raw beef sausage, a Dutch delicacy).

*Kroketten* (croquettes) are a Dutch classic: a ragout with meat, sometimes even fish or shrimp, that's crumbed and deep-fried. (Van Dam, the culinary maven, just published an encyclopaedic history of this creation.) They are also served as small balls called *bitterballen*, with mustard.

*Pannenkoeken* translates as 'pancakes', although North Americans will be in for a surprise – the Dutch variety is huge and a little stretchy, served flat, one to a plate and topped with wide combination of ingredients, both sweet and savoury.

There's plenty of seafood at stalls around the city. *Haring* (herring) is a national institution, prepared with salt or pickled but never cooked; your standard model is beheaded, split and filleted, served with diced onion and sometimes sweet-pickle chips as a garnish. *Paling* (eel) is usually smoked. *Mosselen* (mussels) are best eaten from September to April; the classic preparation is to cook with white wine, chopped leeks and onions, and serve with a side of *frites* or *patat* (French fries).

Some typically Dutch desserts are fruit pie (apple, cherry, banana cream or other fruit), *vla* (custard) and pancakes. Many snack bars and pubs serve *appeltaart* (apple pie) and coffee throughout the day – there's a reason Dutch apple pie is so admired.

## Indonesian

Whatever you do, you must sample this tasty legacy of Dutch colonial history. Some dishes are concoctions rather than traditional Indonesian, but that doesn't make them less appealing. An Indonesian *rijsttafel* – a dozen or more tiny dishes, some startlingly spicy, with rice – should be a highlight of your visit.

Smaller *nasi rames* (boiled rice) is similar in concept and served on one plate. *Bami rames* is the same dish with thick noodles. *Gado-gado* is lightly steamed vegetables with peanut sauce and hard-boiled egg. A delicious staple is *saté* or *sateh* (satay), marinated barbecued beef, chicken or pork on small skewers.

Other stand-bys are *nasi goreng* – fried rice with onions, pork, shrimp and spices, often topped with a fried egg or shredded omelette – and *bami goreng*, the same thing but with noodles.

Indonesian food is usually served mild for Western palates. If you want it hot (*pedis*, pronounced *p-dis*), say so but be prepared for the ride of a lifetime. You can play it safe by asking for *sambal* (chilli paste), although it may already be on the table. *Sambal olek* is red and hot; the dark-brown *sambal badjak* is based on onions and is mild and sweet. If you overdo it, a spoonful of plain rice will douse the flames.

## Surinamese

This former South American colony has dishes familiar to those who know the Caribbean, with African, Indian and Indonesian influences. Chicken features strongly, along with curries (chicken, lamb or beef), potatoes and rice, and a hard-boiled egg is usually in there somewhere. *Roti* are unleavened pancakes. It's a pleasant fire on the tastebuds, and great value.

## PRACTICALITIES

### Opening Hours

Dinner is the main meal, usually served from 6pm to 10pm. Many restaurants only do dinner, and will fill up by 7pm. Try arriving for the 'second sitting', when films and concerts start, between 8.30pm and 9.30pm. Kitchens tend to close by 10pm and leave late-night grazing to the street vendors.

For lunch your best bets are cafés (see also the Drinking & Smoking chapter, p178). Their meals tend to be reliable, but not life-changing. Many cafés open as early as 10am, and lunch

can be ordered from 11am to 2.30pm. They're great places to hang out, even after the kitchen shuts down. Many lunch cafés may allow you to linger until later afternoon.

Breakfast before 10am can be a problem. Unless your hotel serves breakfast, you may need to wait until the cafés open, or locate a bakery.

Restaurants tend to be open for business daily, but a few take Sunday and Monday off. Some go ahead and take several weeks off in July and August, so phone ahead or risk seeing 'On Holiday' at the front door.

## How Much?

Eating out may seem reasonable compared to some other European cities (hello, London and Paris), but know that prices are up sharply since the euro was introduced in 2002.

Lunch will set you back anything from €2.50 for a basic sandwich to €10 for a complicated salad. Main courses will cost €8 to €18, lunch or dinner, at middle-of-the-road restaurants. To cut your bill, look for the *dagschotel* (dish of the day), and hearty appetites might go for a *dagmenu*, a set menu of three or more courses. Except at top-end restaurants, main courses should cost under €25, and three-course dinners are readily available for €25 to €35.

Breakfast tends to be overpriced: at a café, you can expect €5 for coffee, something baked and maybe some orange juice. Consider hitting a bakery the next morning.

A beer will generally set you back around €2, and nonalcoholic drinks are only slightly cheaper. House wines are generally €3 to €5 per glass, although the sky's the limit on full bottles.

Last but not least, many restaurants do not accept credit cards; check in advance.

## Booking Tables

Virtually everyone speaks English well. Apart from the busiest upper-crust restaurants, booking a table is rarely a problem. A phone

## PRICE GUIDE

This guide is based on the average price of a main course, including tax. See individual listings for prices of set meals where available.

€€€	over €25
€€	€12-25
€	under €12

call a day or two before your arrival should do the trick. Seating at most cafés is first come, first served.

## Tipping

If you're from a 'service with a smile' kind of society, service in Amsterdam may be impersonal, off-putting and just plain slow. Don't take it personally, it's not directed at you.

Tax and a service charge are included in the bill, but unless your server really messes up, a modest tip is in order. Round up to the next number, or around 5%; a 10% tip is considered generous. If your bill comes to €9.50, you might leave €10.

If you're paying by credit card or just need change, state the amount you want to pay, including tip, as you hand your payment to your server (this will usually elicit a proper 'thank you!'). Note that servers appreciate being tipped in cash, as they may not actually receive a credit-card tip.

## Self-Catering

Amsterdam has some great takeaway shops, known in some quarters as *traiteurs* (caterers). You'll find slick delis, bistros or street windows selling Spanish tapas, Italian tagliatelli, Indonesian skewers and ol' stand-bys like pizza or falafel. Department stores like De Bijenkorf (p138) and Vroom & Dreesman (p138) have good cafeterias.

The chains Volendamers Vishandel (fish, sandwiches and snacks) and Bakkerij Bart (bakeries) can be found in shopping areas. AH To Go has branches in heavy-traffic zones such as train stations. And fish stands selling *broodje haring* (herring rolls) are always fairly close by.

As for supermarkets, Albert Heijn (look for the white AH on blue) is prominent but competitors such as Dirk van den Broek, Edah and Aldi are nicer-priced. Farmers markets are held throughout town (see p151). The chain Gall & Gall sells wine and beer, and is often attached to Albert Heijn supermarkets.

## CITY CENTRE

The city centre offers everything from supremely elegant Dutch cuisine to the hippest restaurants and DJ clubs. Some of the highest-end places are where you'd least expect them, such as in the Red Light District. Highlights here are the top-rated Blauw aan de Wal (p160)

as well as the little Asia- and Chinatown at the south end of Zeedijk. The bottom of the street called Nes in the Medieval Centre offers several nice cafés and restaurants outside the slipstream. Nieuwmarkt is one of Amsterdam's liveliest squares, and certainly its loveliest; the surrounds brim with tempting eateries.

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

### SUPPER CLUB

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€€  
☎ 638 05 13; www.supperclub.nl; Jonge Roelensteeg 21; 5-course menu €65; 🍷 dinner

If you're looking for a scene, you've found one. Enter the theatrical, all-white room, snuggle on the enormous mattresses and snack on victuals as DJs spin house music. Shows are provocative and entertaining – if it's lamb night, live sheep may be led through to the kitchen. If it's hospital night, look out.

SEA PALACE Map pp62-5 Chinese €€

☎ 626 47 77; www.seapalace.nl; Oosterdokskade 8; mains €9.60-36, yum-cha courses €13.50-15; 🍷 lunch & dinner

Funny thing about floating Chinese restaurants: they look like tourist traps and may well be, but from Hong Kong to Holland many are admired for good food. The Sea Palace's three floors are busy with people, both Chinese and non, who come not just for the great views of the city from across the IJ. Even if you order dim sum from a menu instead of a cart, the shrimp in the *ha kow* dumplings go pop in your mouth just the same.

LUCIUS Map pp62-5 Seafood €€

☎ 624 18 31; www.lucius.nl; Spuistraat 247; mains €17.50-28, set menus €35; 🍷 dinner

Simple, delicious and consistently full, Lucius is known for both fresh ingredients and not mucking them up with lots of sauce and spice. The interior, all fish tanks and tiles, is workmanlike and professional, just like the service.

### D'VIJFF VliegHEN

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€  
☎ 530 40 60; www.thefiveflies.com; Spuistraat 294-302; mains €20-28, set menus from €39; 🍷 dinner  
So what if every tourist and business visitor eats here? Sometimes the herd gets it right.

The 'Five Flies' is a classic, spread out over five 17th-century canal houses. Old-wood dining rooms teem with character, featuring Delft tiles and works by Rembrandt and Breitrer. Some chairs have brass plates for the celebrities who've sat in them.

ORIENTAL CITY Map pp62-5 Chinese €€

☎ 626 83 52; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 177-179; mains €8.50-24, dim sum €2.50-4.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner

This huge Hong Kong-style restaurant with the requisite red lanterns is always lively. Join gaggles of local Chinese for daily dim sum (11.30am to 4.30pm; we like the meaty, flavoursome *cha sieuw bao* pork buns) and a 24-page menu (!) of classic Canto cuisine.

VILLA ZEEZICHT Map pp62-5 Café €€

☎ 626 74 33; Torensteeg 7; mains €3-21; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner

Although you *could* try sandwiches and pastas here, half the patrons seem to be eating the famous apple pie. For €4.50 you get a mountain of apples dusted in cinnamon, surrounded by warm pastry and fresh cream. In warm weather tables are set up on the bridge over the Singel.

HAESJE CLAES Map pp62-5 Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 624 99 98; www.haesjeclaes.nl; Spuistraat 273-275; mains €13.30-20, set menus from €28.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner

Haesje Claes' warm surrounds, a tad touristy but with lots of dark wood and antique knick-knacks, is just the place to sample comforting pea soup and endive *stamppot*. The fish starter has a great sampling of Dutch fishes.

LE PETIT LATIN Map pp62-5 Mediterranean €€

☎ 624 94 25; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 306; mains €11-19.50, set menus €32; 🍷 7-11pm Tue-Sat

Easy to overlook, with its step-down entrance, the 'Little Latin' drips with culinary authority, and it's not just the curled travel posters from the Côte d'Azur. If you can't read the blackboard scrawl, chef Jacques from Marseille will crouch to give you the day's specials – Aquitaine lamb? Fresh mullet flown in from the Riviera? Who can say *non*. The wine list is brief but *formidable*. Reserve or weep.

## BRASSERIE HARKEMA

Map pp62-5 Brasserie €€

☎ 428 22 22; www.brasserieharkema.nl; Nes 67; mains €13-18, set menus €25; 🍷 11am-11pm  
This cavernous ex-tobacco factory started its career as a restaurant in fine fashion a couple of years ago. Now the hype has subsided, it's just a very good stylish brasserie, with a simple lunch menu and staples such as Caesar salad and *entrecôte* for dinner.

GREEN PLANET Map pp62-5 Vegetarian €€

☎ 625 82 80; www.greenplanet.nl; Spuistraat 122; mains €9.50-16.50, sandwiches & salads €6-10; 🍷 dinner Mon-Sat

This modern veggie eatery cares...about your health, biodegradable packaging, peace, love and decent food. Come for a soup, salad, antipasto or cake. Mains include goulash, dumplings and Indian masala.

GREKAS Map pp62-5 Greek €

☎ 620 35 90; Singel 311; dishes €8-15; 🍷 1.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun

What started as a catering shop has bloomed into one of the city's best-loved Greek restaurants. Low overheads (there's almost no seating) means low prices with high-quality, generous portions of Greek home cooking: moussaka, roasted artichokes, chicken in lemon sauce.

## DE KEUKEN VAN 1870

Map pp62-5 Traditional Dutch €

☎ 620 40 18; www.keukenvan1870.com; Spuistraat 4; mains €6-14, 3-course menu €7.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

Thanks to a recent makeover, you'd never guess that this smart-looking place was once a restaurant for the poor. It still keeps up that heritage, though, with decent cooking (think *stamppot* or couscous) at exceedingly decent prices.

## PANNENKOEKENHUIS UPSTAIRS

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €

☎ 626 56 03; Grimburgwal 2; mains €4.50-10; 🍷 noon-5pm

Climb some of the steepest stairs in town to reach this small-as-a-stamp restaurant. The lure? Pancakes that are flavoursome, inexpensive (most under €7.50) and filling. We like the one with bacon, cheese and ginger. It's a one-man show, so service operates at its own pace.

**DOLORES** Map pp62-5 Organic €  
 ☎ 620 33 02; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal; mains €2.75-9; ☺ lunch & afternoon tea  
*Biologische* (organic) is the name of the game at this tiny shop, which resembles a kiddie train station in the traffic island. Try organic burgers, *tostis* (grilled sandwiches), chicken and *frites*. Service has been known to take its time, but it is fun to watch the world go by at the picnic-table seating outdoors. It is on Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, opposite No 289.

**VLAAMS FRITESHUIS**  
 Map pp62-5 Takeaway €  
 ☎ 624 60 75; Voetboogstraat 33; small/large €1.70/2.20, sauces €0.50-0.60; ☺ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat, noon-6pm Sun & Mon  
 This hole-in-the-wall takeaway has drawn the hordes for its monumental *frites* since 1887. The standard is smothered in mayonnaise, though you can ask for ketchup, peanut sauce or a variety of spicy mayos. If the queue's too long, consider **Wil Graanstra Friteshuis** (p166) on Westerkerk square.

Also recommended:

**Kantjil to Go** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 620 09 94; www.kantjil.nl; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 342; dishes €3.75-6.25; ☺ lunch & dinner) Cobble your own Indonesian combo from rice, noodles, meat and veggies.

**Van den Berg's Broodjesbar** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 83 56; Zoutsteeg 4; sandwiches €1.60-4.45; ☺ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Try *gehakt*, thin meatball slices served warm with killer-hot mustard.

**Volendamers Vishandel** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 626 33 88; Zoutsteeg 6; sandwiches €2.20-4.50; ☺ breakfast & lunch) This three-table shop has immaculate fresh fish and a great location.

## RED LIGHT DISTRICT BLAUW AAN DE WAL

Map pp62-5 International €€€  
 ☎ 330 22 57; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 99; mains €24-27, 3-course menu €40; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat  
 Definitely a rose among thorns: a long, often graffiti-covered hallway in the middle of the Red Light District leading to a Michelin-listed garden of Eden. Originally a 17th-century herb warehouse, the white-washed, exposed-brick, multilevel space still features old steel weights and measures, plus friendly, knowledgeable service and refined French- and Italian-inspired

cooking. In summer, grab a table in the romantic garden.

**NAM KEE** Map pp62-5 Chinese €  
 ☎ 624 34 70; www.namkee.net; Zeedijk 113-116; mains €6-16.50; ☺ lunch & dinner  
 It won't win any design awards, but year in, year out, Nam Kee's the most popular Chinese spot in town. And why not: there's good roast anything, and service is snappy. A new, fancier location has opened at **Geldersekade 117** (Map pp62-5).

**NEW KING** Map pp62-5 Chinese €  
 ☎ 625 21 80; www.newking.nl; Zeedijk 115; mains €4-16; ☺ lunch & dinner  
 If you want Chinese on the Zeedijk but don't want to feel like you're slumming it, New King is about the fanciest on the block. The roast meats may have you asking 'how much is that duckie in the window?' (€24 with the full service of different courses.)

**EAT MODE** Map pp62-5 Asian €  
 ☎ 330 08 06; www.eatmode.nl; Zeedijk 105-107; mains €4-12.50; ☺ noon-11pm  
 This smart little fusion diner covers the Pacific Rim in style. Order, take your number and plop down at a New Age marbled-wood table while they whip up your seaweed salad, California spring rolls or Thai tom yam goong soup. Does a booming takeaway trade too.

Also recommended:

**Kam Yin** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 625 31 15; Warmoesstraat 6-8; mains €4-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) Zero atmosphere, just tasty Surinamese and Chinese dishes.

**Skek** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 427 05 51; www.skek.nl; Zeedijk 4-8; mains €6.50-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) Trendy student hangout (student ID gets you one-third off) and live bands.

## NIEUWMARKT

**KRUA THAI** Map pp62-5 Thai €€  
 ☎ 622 95 33; www.kruathai.nl; Staalstraat 22; mains €6.75-25, set menus €19.50-23; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun  
 Top-shelf soups, duck or shrimp curries, and noodle dishes are the order of the day at this sophisticated restaurant with bright art. Note: some locals refer to it by its old name, Tom Yam. A pretheatre menu is available.

# top picks

## EAT STREETS

- **Utrechtsestraat** (Map pp100-1) Hands-down our favourite dining street.
- **Negen Straatjes** (Map p92) A great place to browse for clothing or lunch, home wares or dinner.
- **Haarlemmerstraat** (Map p92) This newly trendy strip on the way out of town has some cool new spots.
- **Leidseplein and surrounds** (Map pp100-1) Included for quantity if not necessarily quality. Prices are reasonable, and it's minutes' walk from entertainment.
- **Albert Cuypstraat** (Map p119) West of the famous market you'll find a stash of exotic choices including Cambodian, Kurdish and Surinamese.

## HEMELSE MODDER

Map pp62-5 Contemporary Dutch €€  
 ☎ 624 32 03; www.hemelsemodder.nl; Oude Waal 9; mains €16, 3-/4-/5-course menus €24/28.50/32; ☺ dinner  
 A little hard to locate, but worth it. Extraordinary care goes into dishes – you might find pot-au-feu with chicken or polenta soufflé – and you may even find a sprig of mint in your carafe of water. Desserts are wonderful, including the namesake *hemelse modder* (heavenly mud) chocolate mousse. The dining room is spare yet comfy, or snag a table out back on a warm night.

## CAFÉ BERN

Map pp62-5 Swiss €  
 ☎ 622 00 34; Nieuwmarkt 9; mains €9-14; ☺ dinner  
 Indulge in a fondue frenzy at this delightfully well-worn brown café. People have been flocking here for more than 30 years for the *gruyère* fondue as well as the *entrecôte*. Note: it's generally closed for a large part of the summer, but do you really want fondue in hot weather anyway? Reservations advised.

## STERK STAALTJE

Map pp62-5 Takeaway €  
 ☎ 624 9065; http://sterkstaaltje.com; Staalstraat 12; prices vary; ☺ lunch  
 Squarely between the Amstel, the Red Light District and Nieuwmarkt is this handsome, *rustique* takeaway shop with lasagne, savoury pies, and lovely olives and cheeses. Lunch will set you back about €5.

# JORDAAN

The restaurants in this part of town exude the conviviality that has long been a hallmark of the Jordaan. The Haarlemmerstraat and surrounds are trendy, but many people still gravitate to the eateries along Westerstraat. You may want to lose your way in the narrow backstreets, where the next hot spot may be opening up.

## BORDEWIJK

Map p86 French €€€  
 ☎ 624 38 99; www.bordewijk.nl; Noordermarkt 7; mains €22-30, set menus €34-50; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun  
 Other places have grander reputations, but some critics dub Bordewijk the king of the hill. The interior is so minimal that there's little to do but appreciate the spectacular French/Italian cooking. The chefs are not afraid to take risks (we once saw lamb's testicles on the menu), but its skilled staff take your wishes with aplomb.

## BALTHAZAR'S KEUKEN

Map p86 French-Mediterranean €€  
 ☎ 420 21 14; www.balthazarskeuken.nl; Elandsgracht 108; 3-course set menu €26; ☺ dinner Wed-Fri  
 Consistently one of Amsterdam's top-rated restaurants. Don't expect a wide-ranging menu – the byword is basically 'whatever we have on hand' – but it's usually absolutely delectable. Plus, there's a modern-rustic look and attentive service (!). Reservations recommended.

## RAKANG THAI

Map p86 Thai €€  
 ☎ 627 50 12; Elandsgracht 29; mains €17-21, 4-course menus €27-32; ☺ dinner  
 Chairs wrapped in straitjackets, bright art on the walls, neckties in the tables (it makes sense when you see it), a *mai pen rai* (no problem) atmosphere and delicious cooking (go for the almost buttery *tom kha gai* soup or crunchy, spicy duck salad) keep it busy here night after night.

## JEAN JEAN

Map p86 French €€  
 ☎ 627 71 53; www.jean-jean.nl; 1e Anjeliersdwarsstraat 14; mains €17-22, 4-course menu €35; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun  
 One of the hottest places in town, this cosy neighbourhood bistro offers honest and affordable Gallic comfort food: soups, meat and fish dishes etc. The setting is understated yet sophisticated, and service is professional.



**NOMADS** Map p86

Middle Eastern €€

☎ 344 64 01; [www.restaurantnomads.nl](http://www.restaurantnomads.nl); Rozengracht 133; mezze plates €3-8.25, couscous €15-21.50, 3-course set menu €45; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sun It's the Supper Club concept on the road to Morocco. Wine, dine and recline on mattresses amid decadent decorations, and graze on platters of mod Middle Eastern snacks while being entertained by belly dancers and DJs. Superbly sexy, and best experienced with a lively group.

**LOCAL** Map p86

International €€

☎ 423 40 39; [www.local-amsterdam.nl](http://www.local-amsterdam.nl); Westerstraat 136; mains €7-19.50; 🍷 dinner This eel's nest of contempo-cool, with long, tall tables stretching its entire length, ensures that you will never eat alone. Go with friends, and it's an instant party. In keeping with the 'long and thin' theme, main dishes are grilled on skewers: there's an international selection from yakitori to beef stroganoff, all served with potatoes, salad and appropriate sauces.

**BURGER'S PATIO** Map p86

International €€

☎ 623 68 54; 2e Tuindwarsstraat 12; mains €13-19, 3-course menu €25; 🍷 dinner Despite its name, this is no hamburger joint. Rather, an air of easy-going cool permeates the modern interior, and the namesake patio is a fun hideout. Meats are free-range, pastas are popular, and touches like crudité, aioli and tapenade make the prices seem more reasonable than they already are.

**JAPANESE PANCAKE WORLD**

Map p86

Japanese €€

☎ 320 44 47; [www.japanesepancakeworld.com](http://www.japanesepancakeworld.com); 2e Egelantiersdwarsstraat 24a; mains €9-19; 🍷 noon-10pm

If the Dutch are famous for pancakes of meat, seafood and veggies, so are the Japanese. At the continent's only shop specialising in *okonomiyaki* (literally, 'cook as you like'), you'll get yours in a hot iron dish with your choice of fillings and topped with flakes of dried bonito. There's a J-pop backdrop and barely two dozen seats.

**DIVAN** Map p86

Turkish €€

☎ 626 82 39; Elandsgracht 14; mains €13-17; 🍷 lunch Fri & Sat, dinner nightly In a town where 'Turkish' usually means 'takeaway' (or 'pizza'), Divan offers a

calming alternative. For €23.50 you get the *meze* combo starter of 10 assorted dips, skewers and salads, and we loved *ali nazik* (minced lamb with aubergines in yogurt garlic sauce), but it was the gracious, sweet service that will take us back.

**MOEDERS** Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 626 79 57; [www.moeders.com](http://www.moeders.com); Rozengracht 251; mains €13-17, 3-course menus €24-28; 🍷 dinner

Mum's the word at 'Mothers'. When this friendly place opened, staff asked customers to bring their own plates, flatware and photos of their own mums as donations, and the result is still a delightful hodge-podge. So is the food, including *stamppot*, seafood, Moroccan dishes, a vegetarian frittata and a *rijsttafel* of traditional Dutch dishes.

**CINEMA PARADISO** Map p86

Italian €€

☎ 623 73 44; [www.cinemaparadiso.info](http://www.cinemaparadiso.info); Westerstraat 184-186; mains €9.50-15; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sun

Action! Cinema Paradiso opened in 2002 in a former movie theatre, and glitterati have been appearing in the dining room ever since. Direct yourself to a booth or table near the open kitchen, and enjoy pastas, pizzas, lots of antipasti and stargazing. Go for cocktails and drink in the atmosphere.

**DE BOLHOED** Map p86

Vegetarian €€

☎ 626 18 03; Prinsengracht 60-62; lunch mains €3.50-11.75, dinner mains €9.50-14.50, 3-course menu €22; 🍷 lunch & dinner

The 'Charlie Brown's' pumpkin patch goes to India! Interior is a nice setting to tuck into enormous, organic Mexican-, Asian- and Italian-inspired dishes; in warm weather, there's a verdant little canalside terrace. Leave room for the banana-cream pie. Veggies swear by it – reserve.

**DE VLIEGENDE SCHOTEL**

Map p86

Vegetarian €€

☎ 625 20 41; Nieuwe Leliestraat 162-168; mains €9-13.75; 🍷 dinner

Service can be spotty at the 'Flying Saucer', but if you're prepared to take your time in the summer camp-chic dining room, you'll enjoy some of the city's favourite veggie gratins, lasagnes and Indian-inflected meals. There's a decent wine list.

**CAFÉ VLINDER** Map p86

Café €€

☎ 626 77 08; Brouwersgracht 139; mains €3.50-13; 🍷 breakfast & lunch This window-lined corner place in the Jordaan serves a magnificent, fresh-made breakfast (€12.50), laden with Dutch cheese, pâté, smoked salmon, eggs, coffee and fresh juice. It's also pleasant for afternoon cake and coffee (try the cheesecake or nut tart). We love the sassy service that describes itself as 'straight-friendly'.

**MOEDER'S POT EETHUISJE**

Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

☎ 623 76 43; Vinkenstraat 119; mains €3.80-11.50, 6-course set menus €13-15.50; 🍷 dinner Mon-Sat *Moeder* (mother) is in his 60s (yes, *his*...he's big and gruff and probably a sweetheart inside), and he's been serving up solid, inexpensive meals for decades. The tiny kitsch-laden shop serves home cooking: beefsteaks, schnitzels and chicken with potatoes and vegetables (some canned) like your own *moeder* always wanted you to eat. The set menus are a steal.

**DUENDE** Map p86

Spanish €€

☎ 420 66 92; [www.cafeduende.nl](http://www.cafeduende.nl); Lindengracht 62; tapas €3.50-9.50; 🍷 dinner Flamenco music (Saturday night), big shared tables and reasonably priced tapas guarantee Duende's popularity. It's great for a party with a big group of friends – or strangers. The front room is the more lively (and attractive) of the two. Note: order at the bar.

**DE BLAFFENDE VIS**

Map p86

Contemporary Dutch €€

☎ 625 17 21; Westerstraat 118; mains under €8.50; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner Meals at the rowdy, corner 'Barking Fish' are better than they need to be for the price (contemporary Dutch – steak, fish, chicken – changing daily). Students and 30-somethings happily bop and swish beer while listening to music with a beat.

**SMALL WORLD CATERING**

Map p86

Takeaway €€

☎ 420 27 74; [www.smallworldcatering.nl](http://www.smallworldcatering.nl); Binnen Oranjestraat 14; sandwiches €5.45-7.50, other mains €4-6; 🍷 10.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, noon-8pm Sun This Australian-run company is known for quality. Small cases house gorgeous

**WE DARE YOU**

Amsterdammers love raw fish. Herring season is announced with all the fanfare of the new Beaujolais elsewhere: look for 'Hollandse Nieuw' signs at the fish kiosks around town. The proper way to eat a herring is to dangle it above the mouth and bite bit by bit (don't worry, it's already been filleted for you).

prepared vegetables and meat dishes, and you can get a variety of quiches and sandwiches including fresh tuna, tapenade and artichoke hearts.

**WINKEL** Map p86

Café €€

☎ 623 02 23; Noordermarkt 43; mains €2.50-6; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner This sprawling, indoor-outdoor space is great for people-watching, popular for coffees and small meals, and out-of-the-park for its tall, cakey apple pie (€2.50). On market days (Mondays and Saturdays) there's almost always a queue out the door.

Also recommended:

**Bloemgracht** (Map p86; ☎ 620 20 88; [www.restaurantbloemgracht.nl](http://www.restaurantbloemgracht.nl); Bloemgracht 47; mains €21.50, set menu €35; 🍷 dinner Wed-Sun) Quality cuisine in a lovely canal house. Try the grilled tuna with smoked potatoes.

**Broodje Mokum** (Map p86; ☎ 623 19 66; Rozengracht 26; sandwiches from €2) Great sandwiches – point and they'll tell you the price.

**Noodle & Go** (Map p86; ☎ 773 09 13; Brouwersgracht 125; dishes €4-7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Noodles or fried rice, plus meat and a veg, and you're on your way.

**WESTERN CANAL BELT**

It may not have the ethnic dining diversity of other parts of town, but the Western Canal Belt makes up for it with some interesting and surprisingly fashionable options. Notably, the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys) are filled with cafés and small restaurants to match their lovely boutiques.

**CHRISTOPHE** Map p92

French €€€

☎ 625 08 07; [www.christophe.nl](http://www.christophe.nl); Leliegracht 46; mains €31-53, 4-course set menus €45-65; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sat

Lobster dishes, duck-liver terrine and an unusual elegance keep Jean-Christophe Royer's Michelin-starred restaurant busy every night. However, the excellent, caring

service puts it over the top in our book, making this an extraordinary restaurant by world, not just Amsterdam, standards.

### DE BELHAMEL Map p92 French €€

☎ 622 10 95; [www.debelhamel.nl](http://www.debelhamel.nl); Brouwersgracht 60; mains €18-21, set menu €32; ☎ dinner

In warm weather the canal-side tables at the head of the Herengracht are an aphrodisiac, and the sumptuous Art Nouveau interior provides the perfect backdrop for excellent, French- and Italian-inspired dishes like silky roast beef.

### LOF Map p92 Fusion €€

☎ 620 29 97; Haarlemmerstraat 62; mains €18-21, 3-course menu €35; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

Chef Sander Louwerens combines South-east Asian and Mediterranean flavours in complex and complementary ways. This is evidenced in dishes such as pike served with fennel and miso sauce. Schoolhouse-surplus décor manages to feel cool.

### STOUT Map p92 Fusion Café €€

☎ 616 36 64; Haarlemmerstraat 73; lunch mains €4.75-13, dinner mains €15-21; ☎ lunch & dinner Slick, hip couples congregate at this airy, artful café to air-kiss, read design magazines, gossip and share imaginative fusion dishes (carrot and coriander soup with spicy tempeh, Thai chicken burger with kimchi) and fruit shakes. In warm weather, sit on an outdoor cushion and watch the world go by.

### CASA PERÚ Map p92 Peruvian €€

☎ 620 37 49; [www.casaperu.nl](http://www.casaperu.nl); Leidsegracht 68; mains €12-20

When the weather's good, there's nothing quite like enjoying a *crema de ajo* (cream of garlic) soup or *lomo saltado* (beef with onion, tomato and French fries) while looking out over the Leidsegracht and the Prinsengracht. Indoors, it's busy and homelike.

### DE STRUISVOGEL Map p92 French €€

☎ 423 38 17; Keizersgracht 312; 3-course menu €19.50; ☎ dinner

This former kitchen to some large canal houses offers a great deal. It's in the basement (*struisvogel* means 'ostrich'), and yes they do serve the bird, along with a nightly rotating menu – generous portions of more conventional French-inspired choices. It gets crowded; book ahead.

### WERCK Map p92 Contemporary Dutch €€

☎ 627 40 79; [www.werck.nl](http://www.werck.nl); Prinsengracht 277; mains €14-18.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

Finally, a café that is worthy of the high-profile location between the Anne Frank Huis and Westerkerk. You can choose from sandwiches and snacks (€3 to €8) or steaks and more involved mains; think chicken with smoked bacon or black tagliatelle with morel sauce. Most people come to see and be seen on the crushed white-stone terrace.

### CILUBANG Map p92 Indonesian €€

☎ 626 97 55; [www.cilubang.com](http://www.cilubang.com); Runstraat 10; mains €7.25-18, rijsttafel €21-37; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

In the Negen Straatjes, cute, cosy and slightly romantic, celadon-hued Cilubang soothes the stomach and soul with *rijsttafel* and attentive, personal service. It's been at it for 2½ decades. The food is west-Javanese style, and with any luck you'll hear gamelan music too.

### DE 2 GRIEKEN Map p92 Greek €€

☎ 625 53 17; Prinsengracht 20; mains €13-17; ☎ dinner

Craving stewed mountain goat or some juicy lamb chops? This relaxed, family-run bistro caters to your carnivorous desires with great grills and gets 'opal's from locals. In nice weather, grab a seat on the flower-lined terrace out back. If you're a fan of Greek wines, this is the place to go.

### ENVY Map p92 Mediterranean €€

☎ 344 64 07; [www.envy.nl](http://www.envy.nl); Prinsengracht 381; Tapas €4.50-17; set menus €50; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Mon-Tue

This hip, sleek restaurant encourages diners to take a five-course menu of seemingly endless, top-notch tasters. The designer globes are there to light up the media stars here most weekends.

### BUFFET VAN ODETTE Map p92 Café €€

☎ 423 60 34; [www.buffer-amsterdam.nl](http://www.buffer-amsterdam.nl); Herengracht 309; mains €3-12.50; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun

Not a buffet but a sit-down café, Odette and Yvette show how good simple cooking can taste when you start with great ingredients and a dash of creativity. Soups, sandwiches, pastas and quiches are mostly organic, and you might find smart little

## SWEET DREAMS

The Dutch craving for sweet things goes back to the Golden Age, when Brazilian sugar poured into Amsterdam's 50-plus sugar refineries to satisfy the demand for confections and sticky delicacies. Calvinist ministers warned about the evils of *lekkerheid*, or the hankering for sweetness, and the nation experienced its first real epidemic of cavities.

The most famous Dutch sweet is the *drop*, sweet or salty liquorice sold in a bewildering variety of flavours and shapes. Familiar ones are *honing* (honey), *munt* (mint), *laurier* (laurel) and *salmiak* (salty). The striped 'Engelse' (English) *drop* is dipped in coconut fondant. You can get your *drop* fix at Het Oud-Hollandsche Snoepwinkelje (p143), and many supermarkets or drugstores have a self-serve 'carousel' of sweets.

Traditional pastries, cakes and biscuits are prepared for special occasions. December is a good time to sample the spicy *speculaas* cookies or *pepernoten*, the little crunchy ginger-nuts handed out at Sinterklaas (p19). On New Year's Eve the air is thick with the aroma of *oliebollen*, the deep-fried dough balls dished up with powdered sugar (the Dutch brought them to America, where someone added a hole and called them donuts). *Muisjes* (little mice) are sugar-coated sprinkles typically served on a round *beschuit* (biscuit) to celebrate the birth of a child – blue and white for a boy, pink and white for a girl.

The delicious Dutch *appeltaart* (apple pie) is eaten year-round, along with a raft of cream cakes such as the popular *Tompouce*, which has a pink sugary icing. Now as in the 17th century, traditional favourites like waffles and *poffertjes* (little pancakes) are covered with a sweet refinement like molasses.

The Dutch have a soft spot for chocolate as well. In 1828 a Dutch chocolate-maker named CJ van Houten invented the cocoa press, and he added an alkalising agent to cocoa powder so that it would mix more easily with water – a process known today as 'dutching'. The result is a chocolate with a dark colour and mild taste, typical of leading Dutch brands such as Droste or Verkade.

extras like pine nuts in your quiche. Sit by the window for one of the city's prettiest canal views.

### FOODISM Map p92 Café €€

☎ 427 51 03; [www.foodism.nl](http://www.foodism.nl); Oude Leliestraat 8; mains €4.50-12; ☎ 11.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun

A hip, colourful little joint run by a fun, relaxed crew. All-day breakfasts (€9), sandwiches like chicken mango and salads make up the day menu; night-time sees patrons tucking into platefuls of pasta – try the 'Kung Funghi' (with three kinds of mushrooms, parsley, walnuts and cream).

### HEIN Map p92 Café €€

☎ 623 10 48; Berenstraat 20; mains €4-11; ☎ breakfast & lunch

Hein simply loves to cook, and it shows in her simple, stylish, sky-lit café – you have to walk through the kitchen to reach the dining room. Media types, doing business over brunch, comment that she has a great touch with simple dishes: *croque monsieur* or *madame*, smoked salmon and fresh fruit salads.

### GOODIES Map p92 Café €€

☎ 625 61 22; Huidenstraat 9; dishes €3.50-10; ☎ lunch & dinner

This once-country place in the Negen Straatjes with rustic picnic tables has gone

glam with a slick makeover, a bar and even occasional DJ nights. They've joined the tapas wave, but it's still popular for creative sandwiches like grilled chicken with salad and pine nuts.

### LUST Map p92 Café €€

☎ 626 57 91; Runstraat 13; mains €3.50-8.50; ☎ breakfast & lunch

Parquet floors and walls, supermod ceiling lamps and Brazilian dance beats animate this glam café. It's a fair bet you'll spot models nibbling focaccia sandwiches, *toastis*, generous salads or the popular grilled chicken club with avocado.

### NIELSEN Map p92 Café €€

☎ 330 60 06; Berenstraat 19; dishes €4-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun

This sunny café, with its bright interior filled with fresh flowers, has a tasty set breakfast – eggs, toast, fruit, juice and coffee (€7.50). During lunch a large variety of salads and sandwiches are served: try the BLT or gigantic chicken club sandwich.

### PANCAKE BAKERY Map p92 Contemporary Dutch €€

☎ 625 13 33; [www.pancake.nl](http://www.pancake.nl); Prinsengracht 191; mains €4.95-11.50; ☎ lunch & dinner

This basement restaurant in a restored warehouse features a dizzying 79 varieties

of this Dutch speciality from sweet (chocolate) to savoury (the 'Egyptian', topped with lamb, sweet peppers and garlic sauce). There are also omelettes, soups, desserts and lots of tourists given its proximity to the Anne Frank Huis.

## WIL GRAANSTRA FRITESHUIS

Map p92 Fries €  
☎ 624 40 71; Westermarkt 11; fries €1.70-2.40;  
🕒 11am-6pm

This little stall near the Anne Frank Huis has been serving up crispy fries with delectable mayo since 1956. Legions of Amsterdammers swear by them. While you're there, ask Wil to do his impression of 'Terminator' Schwarzenegger – it's priceless.

Also recommended:

**Koh-I-Noor** (Map p92; ☎ 623 31 33; Westermarkt 29; mains €12.50-19.50; 🍴 dinner) Venerable Indian with curries and tandoori close to Anne Frank Huis.

**Letting** (Map p92; ☎ 627 93 93; www.letting.nl; Prinsensstraat 3; sandwiches €4.50-7; 🕒 8am-5.30pm) Bright, charming snack 'n' sandwich bar, for pit-stopping between purchases.

**'t Kuytje** (Map p92; ☎ 620 10 45; Gasthuismolensteeg 9; sandwiches €2-3.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) Tile-lined sandwich shop. Try the pastrami and raw meats.

## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

All roads in Amsterdam seem to lead to Leidseplein, but we don't really recommend eating there. While cheap and cheerful, establishments there tend not to be particularly distinctive. A short walk away, however, you'll find some attractive options.

Much the same could also be said for Rembrandtplein. Instead of eating there, walk a few steps to Utrechtsestraat, the finest restaurant row in town.

**VAN VLAANDEREN** Map pp100-1 French €€€  
☎ 622 82 92; Weteringschans 175; set menus €39.50-55.00; 🕒 6.30pm-10.30pm, closed Sun & Mon

One of our favourite French restaurants in town, with lovely canal views from the raised deck. Owner Bas Verstift will come out to chat and advise on your wine, and the fine nuances of dishes are always surprising – such as tuna carpaccio with avocado, chicken with bacon mousse or langoustines done three ways.

## top picks

### VIEWS WHILE YOU EAT

- **De Belhamel** (p164) In summer, try for an outdoor table overlooking the canal: you'll have the beautiful Brouwersgracht alongside you and the handsome Herengracht at your feet.
- **La Rive** (below) As if two Michelin stars weren't enough, this restaurant at the Intercontinental Hotel sits right on the Amstel for riverfront views.
- **M Café** (p169) Drink in the views from the top floor of the Metz & Co department store on the Keizersgracht.
- **Sea Palace** (p158) This floating Chinese restaurant is pleasing on the eye, and pleasing on the t.

**LA RIVE** Map pp100-1 French €€€

☎ 622 60 60; www.restaurantlarive.com; Amstel Intercontinental Hotel, Professor Tulpplein 1; mains €34-55; 🍴 breakfast daily, lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat

Two Michelin stars and a formal dining room with graciously spaced tables and views over the Amstel make La Rive the perfect venue for an out-to-impress lunch or dinner. The menu changes frequently, but standbys include turbot and truffle in potato pasta, or, as you'd expect, a starter of caviar.

**RISTORANTE D'ANTICA** Italian €€€

Map pp100-1  
☎ 623 38 62; www.dantica.nl; Reguliersdwarstraat 80-82; mains €13-39, set menus from €35; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun

Although D'Antica's three dining rooms get their share of celebrities, you'd be hard pressed to find a more welcoming restaurant in town. There's a familiar selection of pastas and meats, but cognoscenti order *spaghetti al parmigiano* (not on the menu) – and everyone may watch as waiters turn steaming pasta inside a wheel of cheese.

**SEGUGIO** Map pp100-1 Italian €€€

☎ 330 15 03; www.segugio.nl; Utrechtsestraat 96; pastas €15-17, mains €26-36; 🍴 dinner Mon-Sat This fashionably minimalist storefront with two levels of seating is the sort of place other chefs go for a good dinner. It's known for risotto and high-quality ingredients combined with a sure hand. Book ahead – it's almost always busy.

**SLUIZER** Map pp100-1 International €€

☎ 622 63 76; www.sluiser.nl; Utrechtsestraat 43-45; mains €14.50-24.50, 3-course menu €19.50; 🍴 dinner

This old-line institution – with its romantic, enclosed garden terrace – historically comprises two restaurants: a Parisian-style 'meat' restaurant (No 43) and a fish restaurant (No 45), though both menus are available in both restaurants. Spare ribs are the speciality of the former and bouillabaisse the speciality of the latter.

**RESTAURANT RED**

Map pp100-1 Seafood/French €€

☎ 320 18 24; www.restaurantred.nl; Keizersgracht 594; mains €14.50-24.50, set menus €25; 🕒 6.00pm-midnight

For those paralysed by choice, the very sexy Red is for you. It's all about steak or lobster here, and whatever way you're wired, the stylish waitresses will match the right wine. No prizes for guessing the main colour scheme.

**TUJUH MARET** Map pp100-1 Indonesian €€

☎ 427 98 65; www.tujuh-maret.nl; Utrechtsestraat 73; mains €13.50-23.50, rijsttafel €23.50; 🍴 lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly

Dare we say it? Tujuh Maret, next door to Tempo Doeloe, is just as good but attitude-free and cheaper. Grab a wicker chair and tuck into spicy Sulawesi-style dishes like dried, fried beef or chicken in red-pepper sauce. *Rijsttafel* is laid out according to spice intensity; *makanan kecil* is a mini-rijsttafel for €15.

**HERRIE** Map pp100-1 International €€€

☎ 622 08 38; Utrechtsestraat 30a; dishes €18-23; set menus €39.50-49.00; 🕒 6-10pm Mon-Sat

The name translates as 'uproar' – after all, the chef appeared on a Dutch cooking programme 'Uproar in the Kitchen' – but make no mistake, this skilled team runs like clockwork. Refined creations such as marinated lobster with parmesan cream emerge from the open kitchen with choreographed timing, served in the chic grey-and-black interior. The only drawback is the limited ventilation, irritating if smokers are present.

**SATURNINO** Map pp100-1 Italian €€

☎ 639 01 02; Reguliersdwarstraat 5; mains €7.50-23; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The menu at this Italian bistro is as long as the phone book in a village in Tuscany.

Stunning gay couples pack the different levels of this Art Nouveau-tiled and styled space for pizzas, pasta and playful flirting, and it's perfect for a low-key lunch with your fashion-industry friends.

**TEMPO DOELOE** Map pp100-1 Indonesian €€

☎ 625 67 18; Utrechtsestraat 75; mains €19.50-21.50, rijsttafel & set menus €25-35; 🍴 dinner Mon-Sat

One of the best Indonesian restaurants in the city (it charges accordingly), Tempo Doeloe's setting and service are pleasant and decorous without being overdone. Dishes bring out subtle flavours amid the spice, and staff are happy to accommodate vegetarians. Plus, there's an extraordinary wine list. Downside: it's a bit supercilious – you have to ring a doorbell to enter.

**TAKE THAI** Map pp100-1 Thai €€

☎ 622 05 77; Utrechtsestraat 87; mains €14-19.75, set menus €25-36; 🍴 dinner

This modern restaurant plates up some of the best Thai food in the city. Choose from a variety of curries spiced according to your palate. The Penang beef curry is a winner, as is the fish fried in lemongrass and Thai basil.

**PASTA E BASTA** Map pp100-1 Italian €€€

☎ 422 22 26; www.pastaebasta.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 8; 3-course menu €34; 🍴 dinner There may be better Italian food in town, but Pasta e Basta is popular with large groups year in, year out thanks to its singing waitstaff, who perform opera, standards and more. Regulars swear by the antipasto buffet and grilled meats. Reserve well in advance.

**THAI CORNER** Map pp100-1 Thai €€

☎ 320 66 84; Kerkstraat 66; mains €9.50-19.50, set menus €23-28; 🍴 dinner

Don't dismiss this cute little place: it does seriously authentic Thai. Locals and restaurant critics swoon over squid with garlic pepper and tofu with Thai basil, and stare agog at the over-the-top, carved wooden bar at the back. Other restaurants could afford to take lessons from the self-effacing service.

**ROSE'S CANTINA** Map pp100-1 Mexican €€

☎ 625 97 97; www.rosescantina.com; Reguliersdwarstraat 38-40; dishes €5.50-19.50; 🍴 dinner Even if the Californians and Texans (not to mention Mexicans) among us wouldn't



stamp this place as authentic, it's hard not to love the gorgeous courtyard and fiesta interior. Fajitas, quesadillas and enchiladas are super sized, and margaritas taste good on any continent.

### **SZMULEWICZ** Map pp100-1 International €€

☎ 620 28 22; [www.szmulewicz.nl](http://www.szmulewicz.nl); Bakkersstraat 12; mains €10-19; 🍴 dinner

Szmulewicz's décor is at once slick and breezy (trompe l'oeil marble walls, sculpted lighting), a diversity reflected in its menu of reliable, ever-changing international cooking: pastas, tapas, Greek dishes, beef filets and vegetarian specialities. In summer, buskers play outside on this quiet block off Rembrandtplein.

### **PASTINI** Map pp100-1 Italian €€

☎ 622 17 01; [www.pastini.nl](http://www.pastini.nl); Leidsegracht 29; mains €9.50-19; 🍴 dinner

With a *gezellig*, rustic-renaissance interior and a can't-beat-it location facing two canals, Pastini wins praise for its looks, pastas and prices. Another speciality is the antipasto starter (€10.25 for five choices), but save room for dessert.

### **PIET DE LEEUW** Map pp100-1 Steakhouse €€

☎ 623 71 81; [www.pietdeleeuw.nl](http://www.pietdeleeuw.nl); Noorderstraat 11; mains €11.50-18; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner nightly

The building dates from 1900, it's been a steakhouse and hangout since the 1940s, and the dark and cosy atmosphere has barely changed since. If you don't get your own table, you may meet folks from all over (including, admittedly, tourists) at a common table, over well-priced steaks with toppings like onions, mushrooms or bacon, served with salad and piping-hot *frites*.

### **CAFÉ MORLANG** Map pp100-1 Café €€

☎ 625 26 81; [www.morlang.nl](http://www.morlang.nl); Keizersgracht 451; lunch mains €3.50-18, dinner mains €10-18; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Grab a fashion magazine, order tomato soup or tarte tatin, or choose from a rotating menu with influences from Italy to Thailand. The canal-side terrace is fab in warm weather; indoors enjoy the high ceilings and gigantic portraits of staff members painted on the back wall. Friday nights it's a low-key gay hangout – so low-key that you may not realise it.

### **CAFÉ WALEM** Map pp100-1 Café €€

☎ 625 35 44; Keizersgracht 449; lunch mains €4.50-9.50, dinner mains €9.50-17.50; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner

The industrial-mod building by Gerrit Rietveld, two terraces, friendly service and a changing menu keep this place busy. There's a popular *carpaccio* sandwich, mains including fish and duck, a neat line of soups and salads, and coffee from Illy.

### **LOS PILONES** Map pp100-1 Mexican €€

☎ 320 46 51; [www.lospilones.nl](http://www.lospilones.nl); Kerkstraat 63; starters €3.50-7.75, mains €12.50-13.75; 🍴 4-11.30pm Tue-Sun

Owners Hector and Pedro consistently set the standard among Amsterdam's handful of Mexican restaurants. If you're looking for wonderfully grilled *bistek*, crispy chicken rolls and fruity margaritas, you're definitely in the right place. No tacos ('we don't do Tex-Mex') but who cares? One of their 60 tequilas will help you get over it.

### **PATA NEGRA** Map pp100-1 Spanish €

☎ 422 62 50; Utrechtsestraat 142; tapas €3.50-15, most under €8.50; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Tapas and only tapas. The alluringly tiled exterior is matched by a vibrant crowd inside, especially on weekends, downing sangria by the jug and all those small plates (the garlic-fried shrimps and grilled sardines are standouts). Margaritas are made with freshly squeezed lime juice, as they should be. Arrive before 6.30pm or reserve.

### **PYGMA-LION** Map pp100-1 African €

☎ 420 70 22; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 5a; mains lunch €5.50-13, dinner 14-25; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun

This modern South African bistro plates up animals you normally have to go to a zoo to see, like ostrich, springbok and zebra. Squeamish stomachs will still find more domesticated options: vegetarian dishes, 'tipsy' tart and blackcurrant scones.

### **GOLDEN TEMPLE** Map pp100-1 Vegetarian €

☎ 626 85 60; [www.restaurantgoldentemple.nl](http://www.restaurantgoldentemple.nl); Utrechtsestraat 126; mains €6.85-14.25; 🍴 dinner

Golden Temple's quietly upscale setting means that you don't have to feel like you're back in school just because you're eating vegetarian food. Its international menu of Indian thali, Middle Eastern and Mexican platters is good and inexpensive. Leave room for the totally wicked banana-cream pie.

## **FEBO A-GO-GO**

The cheesy fast-food chain Febo (*fay-bo*) deserves the Amsterdam sex-and-drugs treatment: before first contact, however delightful, you might as well educate yourself.

With deep-fryers like sewage tanks and a steady clientele of bottom-feeders, Febo is secretly loved for its cheap, filling, heart-clogging treats (mostly €1 to €2). Then there's the presentation – rows upon rows of tiny glass doors like a miniature Red Light District, lined with gorgeous bits that practically wink at you: *kroketten* of veal or beef, *kibburger* (chicken burger), Feboburger (thought to be real beef with BBQ sauce and lettuce) and enough variations to send Ronald McDonald screaming for cover. Insert a coin or two into a slot and open sesame, you've got the greasiest date of your life.

OK, it's down and dirty, but as long as you're in and out quickly, who's gonna know?

### **WAGAMAMA** Map pp100-1 Japanese €

☎ 528 77 78; Max Euweplein 10; mains €8-13; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The long rows of rectangular tables, laid out cafeteria-style, are often filled with hipsters fortifying themselves for bike trips or nights on the town. Staples include chicken ramen, Japanese curries and fried noodles or rice.

### **M CAFÉ** Map pp100-1 Café €

☎ 520 78 48; Keizersgracht 455; mains €4-12; 🍴 10am-5pm

Drink in that amazing panoramic view! The location, high above the Keizersgracht in the top-floor gallery of the ritzy Metz Department Store, gives new meaning to 'high tea' (€12), although other dishes are nothing you can't find elsewhere (soup, salads or sandwiches).

### **BOJO** Map pp100-1 Indonesian €

☎ 622 74 34; [www.bojo.nl](http://www.bojo.nl); Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 51; mains €7.25-11.50; 🍴 lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily (open until 2am)

After a night on the town, there's nothing like a little Indonesian. Bojo is a late-night institution. Clubbers come for sizzling satays, filling fried rice and steaming bowls of noodle soup. The quality may be uneven, but the food is certainly well priced.

### **ULIVETO** Map pp100-1 Takeaway €

☎ 423 00 99; Weteringschans 118; dishes €4.50-10.50; 🍴 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat

In a capacious, spare atmosphere of understated luxury, this shop is lined with huge crocks of olive oil and splendid displays of Italian specialities. If you prefer to dine in, try the long white marble table when cooking demonstrations or classes are not being held there.

### **ZUSHI** Map pp100-1 Japanese €

☎ 330 68 82; Amstel 20; dishes €3-8.75; 🍴 lunch & dinner

This conveyor-belt sushi shop features post-industrial chic décor (stainless steel, brick and blondwood), club tunes, lighting service, and new grilled dishes. Add up the colours of your plates to figure out the bill.

### **VAN DOBBEN** Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 624 42 00; Korte Reguliersdwarsstraat 5; dishes €2-7.50; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner

This diner with the hospital-tile décor has been supplying Amsterdam's best *kroketten* (€2) since 1945. Also much beloved for sandwiches, soups and omelettes, and a compulsory stop on a Rembrandtplein pub crawl.

## **VILLAGE BAGELS**

### Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 427 22 13; [www.villagebagels.nl](http://www.villagebagels.nl); Vijzelstraat 139; bagel sandwiches €2.80-5.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch

The people who gave Amsterdam bagel-chic are going like gangbusters. You may feel like a New Yorker as you dive into a bagel with salmon, chive cream cheese and capers, especially if you grab the newspaper. But you'll remember where you are at the **Stromarkt branch** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 528 91 52; Stromarkt 2), which has a canal-side terrace.

## **BAGELS & BEANS**

### Map pp100-1 Sandwich Shop €

☎ 330 55 08; [www.bagelsbeans.nl](http://www.bagelsbeans.nl); Keizersgracht 504; bagels €2.50-5.50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri, lunch Sat & Sun

Join the crowds for bagels with all the usual toppings, plus some new-fangled

ones (smoked chicken with avocado and pesto). Top it all off with a slice of dense fig cake; it goes exceedingly well with coffee. There's another branch in **De Pijp** (Map p119; ☎ 672 16 10, Ferdinand Bolstraat 70).

## BROODJE VAN KOOTJE

Map pp100-1 Sandwiches €

☎ 623 20 36; Leidseplein 20; broodjes from €2; ☎ lunch & dinner

This is Amsterdam's longest-running sandwich bar, although you'd never know it by its appearance (Micky D's has more charm). Still, it stays open for late-night munchies, the quality is solid and you can't beat the two locations (second branch at **Spui 28**, Map pp62-5), right in the heart of the pub 'n' club zone.

Also recommended:

**Gala** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 623 63 03; Reguliersdwarsstraat 38; tapas €6-12; ☎ dinner) Toothsome tapas, each more like a main meal, within Rose's Cantina (p167).

**Loekie** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 624 42 30; Prinsengracht 705; broodjes €2.25-5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Butcher shop with 150 types of fillings to stuff into a *broodje* for you.

**Maoz Falafel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 420 74 35; Muntplein 1; sandwiches €2.80-4.30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Its flagship creation is crispy, hot and authentic, with endless salad and toppings

**Wok to Walk** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 624 29 41; Leidsestraat 96; dishes €4-9.50; ☎ 9am-midnight) For noodly refueling. Shockingly healthy in this part of town.

## OLD SOUTH

The refined neighbourhood that hosts the Concertgebouw, major museums and swanky shops is home to some very chi-chi restaurants. Don't be surprised if you bump into tenor Plácido Domingo or violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter as you wait for seating. The eastern part of Van Baerlestraat is less formal, with traditional Dutch and tapas.

**BARK** Map p110 Seafood €€

☎ 675 02 10; www.bark.nl; Van Baerlestraat 120; mains €13-24; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner nightly

A quick hop from the Concertgebouw, this genteel place does a big pre- and post-performance business. For starters, choose from a long shellfish menu or try the blinis of smoked oilfish. For mains, we like the grilled tuna steak with bacon and balsamic sauce.

## COBRA CAFÉ-RESTAURANT

Map p110 International €

☎ 470 01 11; Hobbemastraat 18; mains €5-12; ☎ lunch & dinner

This arty glass cube of a restaurant, full of original works by Corneille and Appel, sure is touristy. But when you're all museumed out and need a salad, a massive club sandwich or a slice of 'Karel Appel taart', you'll hardly notice. The hi-tech toilets are almost worth the €0.50 admission.

## SABOR DE MARIA

Map p110 Mediterranean Tapas €

☎ 662 62 76; www.sabordemaria.nl; Roelof Hartstraat 60; mains €6.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

This catering shop sells tapas from €1.25 per 100g, such as meatballs, stuffed grape leaves and garlic chicken wings, and main dishes like rib eye with pepper sauce, vegetable lasagne and Spanish chicken. Take it away, or settle at one of the few tables.

**SAMA SEBO** Map p110 Indonesian €

☎ 662 81 46; www.samasebo.com; PC Hooftstraat 27; rijsttafel per person €27.50, lunch specials €15, dishes €2-6.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat

Sama Sebo looks more like a brown café than a trip to the South Seas, and that's OK. The *rijsttafel* is 17 dishes (four to seven at lunch time), and you can get individual plates if that's too much. It's had the same formula since 1970, so who are we to question?

Also recommended:

**La Falote** Map p110; ☎ 622 54 54; Roelof Hartstraat 26; mains €6.50-14; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Home-style Dutch cooking. Wait till the owner brings out the accordion.

**Renzo's** (Map p110; ☎ 673 16 73; www.renzos.nl; Van Baerlestraat 67; dishes €1.95-2.95; ☎ 11am-9pm) Italian takeaway deli with a popular miniterrace.

## VONDELPARK & AROUND

For lazy grazing, the Vondelpark has several cafés whose terraces buzz on a warm summer's day. The streets just north of the park, meanwhile, are a real find for lovers of world food. Look out for exotic dishes from Asia and Africa served in surrounds that are earthy, authentic and refreshingly low-key.

**'T BLAUWE THEEHUIS** Map p116 Café €€

Round Blue Teahouse; ☎ 662 02 54; www

.blauwetheehuis.nl; Vondelpark 5; lunch €3.50-5, dinner mains €14-19; ☎ 9am-10pm

This functionalist teahouse from 1936 is a wonderful multilevel building that serves coffee, cake and alcohol; its terrace and balcony are great for a beer on a sunny day, even in winter when the heaters are on.

**PALOMA BLANCA** Map p116 Moroccan €€

☎ 612 64 85; www.palomablanca.nl; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 145; mains €13-16.50; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

The name is Spanish, but the lanterns, dishware and mosaic-top tables are straight out of a Marrakech souk. Try the starter of olives and *brik* (spicy tuna spread), mains of couscous and *tajine* (Moroccan stew) or mixed grills of spicy sausage, lamb cutlets and chicken. It's the only place in town to cook with *smet*, a specially aged butter.

**LALIBELA** Map p116 Ethiopian €€

☎ 683 83 32; 1e Helmersstraat 249; mains €7.50-13; ☎ dinner

This shop just north of the Overtoom was the Netherlands' first Ethiopian restaurant, and it's still our favourite. Aksumite-hide paintings with Christian motifs hang on the walls. You can drink Ethiopian beer from a half-gourd, and taste your stews, egg and vegetable dishes using *endjera*, a spongy pancake, instead of utensils. Trippy African music rounds out the experience.

## WAROENG ASJE

Map p116 Javanese/Surinamese €

☎ 616 65 89; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 180; mains €5-12, rijsttafel €28; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily

This counter-service shop serves *rijsttafel*, but you can get some of the same food in human-sized portions with the *nasi rames* special (€9) – a heaped plate of roasted meats, on skewers or in spicy stews, with stir-fried or pickled vegetables, and a deep-fried hard-boiled egg.

**HAP HMM** Map p116 Traditional Dutch €

☎ 618 18 84; 1e Helmersstraat 33; mains €5-7; ☎ 4.30-8pm Mon-Fri

Elsewhere €6 might buy you a bowl of soup, but at this wood-panelled neighbourhood place €6 might buy an entire dinner: simple Dutch cooking (meat + veggies +

## TOO TIRED TO KOOK?

The **Kinderkookkafé** (Map p116; ☎ 625 32 57; Vondelpark 6; ☎ ring for hours & reservations) lets the kids take over the kitchen with careful supervision. The small fry prepare meals from pancakes and pizzas to Moroccan, write up the menus, and even clean up (well, just a little).

potatoes), served on stainless-steel dishes. Beer is cheap too.

## PASTA DI MAMMA

Map p116 Italian/Takeaway €

☎ 664 83 14; www.pastadimamma.nl; PC Hooftstraat 52; sandwiches €3.10-5, antipasti per 100g €2.85-4.90; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun Casual, friendly Pasta di Mamma is supremely located for picking up a picnic to take to the Vondelpark. You can choose from dozens of antipasti, gorgeous salads and more substantial plates. The countrified cafeteria space is also pleasant for eating in.

## DE PIJP

Anything can happen on De Pijp's cuisine scene – it's funky, frilly and fashionable, often all at once. West of the Albert Cuypmarkt, the Albert Cuypstraat is lined with unique ethnic spots, while to the north, the streets around Marie Heinekenplein heave with a spirited crowd of local 20- to 40-somethings.

**PUYCK** Map p119 International €€€

☎ 676 76 77; www.puyck.nl; Ceintuurbaan 147; set menus from €36; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat

This place near Sarphatipark offers neither games nor pretension, just imaginative, sophisticated cooking appropriate for a nice night out. Think baby lobster with lettuce, duck breast in Chinese five-spice, or a white wine-poached pear, all served with flair. If it has the Thai curry sorbet, consider yourself lucky.

**MAMOUCHE** Map p119 Moroccan €€

☎ 673 63 61; www.restaurantmamouche.nl; Quellijnstraat 104; mains €14.50-22; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

Mamouche gets serious acclaim for modern Moroccan amid minimalism. Exposed flooring, mottled walls and slat-beam ceilings complement the changing selection of couscous, lamb and fish dishes. Check out

the brass fixtures in the loo – if you can find it. Reservations are a must.

**KLOKSPIJS** Map p119 French International €€  
☎ 364 25 60; Hemonystraat 38; mains €19.50, set menus €28.50; ☎ dinner Wed-Sun

Located in an old bell-maker's workshop, this charming, intimate restaurant with a handful of tables makes for a fine end to a day of poking around De Pijp. The three-course menu of, say, smoked duck breast salad, grilled sea bass and strawberry-rhubarb cake is a class act, and the wine selection is small but superb.

**BALTI HOUSE** Map p119 Indian €€  
☎ 470 89 17; Albert Cuypstraat 41; mains €10.50-18; ☎ dinner

One of the best-kept secrets in De Pijp is this exceedingly friendly, quick-serving, always-tasty spot. The butter chicken masala (€12.50) is consistently smooth and tender but the fiery tandooris and biryani won't disappoint either. Start with a rich mango lassi and a chapatti *amuse-bouche* on the shady terrace.

**ZEN** Map p119 Japanese €€  
☎ 627 06 07; Frans Halsstraat 38; mains €6.50-17.75; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat

Let's be frank: many Japanese restaurants are lovely, elegant poseurs. Zen, however, offers cooking like *okāsan* (mum) used to make: *domburi* (bowls of rice with various ingredients on top), sushi and *tonkatsu* (deep-fried pork cutlet) are just the start. Décor: minimalist Dutch-meets-Japanese. It's also popular for takeaway.

**ZAGROS** Map p119 Kurdish €€  
☎ 670 04 61; www.zagrosrestaurant.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 50; mains €10-15.75; ☎ dinner

Never tried Kurdish food? Neither had we, but we're glad we did. Just as Kurdistan straddles Greece and Persia, so does the cuisine, with grills and stews (mostly lamb and chicken), salads of cucumber, tomato or onion, and starters like hummus and *dumast* (thick, dry yogurt).

**CAFÉ DE PIJP** Map p119 Café €€  
☎ 618 16 69; Ferdinand Bolstraat 17-19; mains €13.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner

De Pijp, the restaurant, is a fitting emblem of De Pijp, the neighbourhood: bright,

young, cheerful, colourful, reasonably priced and good-looking both outside and in. You might see skinny young things digging into enormous plates of fish paella or tempura-style shrimp.

**TURKIYE** Map p119 Turkish €  
Ferdinand Bolstraat 48; mains €6.75-15.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner

English may not work at this simple shop, but it doesn't matter: the dishes inside the glass case are plenty eloquent. Locals value *Turkiye* for its grilled mains and small plates like stuffed tomatoes and Turkish pizza (€1 to €3.50). Eat-in or takeaway.

**BAZAR AMSTERDAM** Map p119 Middle Eastern/Fusion €  
☎ 675 05 44; www.bazaramsterdam.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 182; mains €8-14.50, 3-course menu €15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner

Beneath a golden angel in the middle of the Albert Cuypmarkt, this one-time Dutch Reformed church has fab-u-lous tile murals and 10,001 Arabian lights to complement the cuisine: from Morocco through Turkey, Lebanon and Persia. Even the plates are gorgeous and exotic. Breakfast and lunch are served all day, or just come for a beer and baklava or coffee and apple pie.

**CAMBODJA CITY** Map p119 Cambodian €  
☎ 671 49 30; Albert Cuypstraat 58-60; mains €3.50-13.50, set dinner for 2 from €24; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun

The owner's welcome is warm and friendly, and the flavours are from across Southeast Asia – *loempias* (spring rolls), Vietnamese noodle soups, Thai curries etc. Set menus also reflect the different traditions, and there are fab displays of takeaway foods in case you don't feel like eating in.

**ALBERT CUYP 67** Map p119 Surinamese €  
☎ 671 13 96; Albert Cuypstraat 67; mains €3.20-8.40; ☎ lunch & dinner

If you're looking for stylish surrounds, turn away now. If, however, you're after quality examples of Surinamese food, take a seat. A colossal portion of *roti kip* (chicken curry, flaky roti bread, potatoes, cabbage and egg) is a fine replenishment after a couple of hours at Albert Cuypmarkt.

**DE BURGERMEESTER** Map p119 Burgers €  
☎ 670 93 39; www.burgermeester.eu; Albert Cuypstraat 48; burgers €4-7.50; ☎ noon-11pm  
This sleek little bistro makes the finest burgers in town, bar none. It uses only organic beef (or lamb, falafel or tilapia), in mouth-stretching portions that would pass as a main dish without a bun. Then come the toppings: spicy fusion veggies, bean sprouts, piri-iri mayo and more. The name is a play on 'mayor' (*burgemeester*).

**BAKKEN MET PASSIE** Map p119 Bakery €  
☎ 670 13 76; http://debakkerswinkel.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 51-53; ☎ 8am-6pm Tue-Sat  
Say your sweetie hates ethnic food but you desperately want something exotic on the Albert Cuyp. This quietly fancy shop bakes the appropriate bribes like yummy Valrhona chocolate tart (€3.85 per slice) or lemon cake (€6.50 per small loaf).

**TAART VAN M'N TANTE** Map p119 Sweets €  
☎ 776 46 00; www.detaart.com; Ferdinand Bolstraat 10; cakes per slice around €4; ☎ 10am-6pm  
One of Amsterdam's best-loved cake shops operates from this uber-kitsch parlour at the entrance to De Pijp: apple pies (Dutch, French or 'tipsy'), pecan pie, and tarts with ingredients like truffles and marzipan with strawberry liqueur. Savouries include the mozzarella-pesto quiche. Hot-pink walls accent cakes dressed like Barbie dolls – or are they Barbies dressed like cakes?

**MÁS TAPAS** Map p119 Spanish €  
☎ 664 00 66; Saenredamstraat 37; tapas per plate from €3; ☎ dinner  
While 'tapas' has become Amsterdamese for anything served on a small plate, this cool, whitewashed room serves the real thing and is full of funsters having a garlicky good time. It wins raves from old and new customers alike.

Also recommended:

**De Soepwinkel** (Map p119); ☎ 673 22 93; 1e Sweelinkstraat 19f; soups €3.50-10) Sleek, airy souper, serving home-made quiches, cakes and tarts.

**Gelateria Italiano Peppino** (Map p119); ☎ 676 49 10; 1e Sweelinkstraat 16; scoops from €0.90; ☎ 11am-11pm) De Pijp's blue-ribbon ice-cream maker, just off the Albert Cuyp market.

**Nieuw Albina** (Map p119); ☎ 379 02 23; Albert Cuypstraat 49; mains €5-11.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) More polished than Albert Cuyp 67, but with flavours just as bold.

## PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

The Plantage may be just steps from Nieuwmarkt, but what a difference those few steps make, taking you to an area that's quiet yet close to some important sights. In the Eastern Islands, a lot of our favourite places are by (or in some cases, literally on) the water. Choose from the historic and homely to world-class slick. The Eastern Docklands is the end of the line, but many agree that the trek is worth it for its beautiful eateries and innovative cuisine.

### PLANTAGE

**PLANCIUS** Map p122 International €€  
☎ 330 94 69; www.restaurantplancius.nl; Plantage Kerklaan 61a; mains €16-19; ☎ lunch & dinner  
Next to the Resistance Museum and opposite the Artis Zoo, this dramatically stylish space (bright red bar at the back) is where TV execs head to cut deals over big serves of upmarket comfort food. Lunch is typically sandwiches, salads and pastas. The menu changes quarterly, and there are friendly, good-looking waiters.

**ABE VENETO** Map p122 Italian €  
☎ 639 23 64; Plantage Kerklaan 2; mains €4.50-12.50; ☎ lunch & dinner  
Sometimes you just want a corner place with decent food at honest prices. The pizza menu tops out at €9.50 and has 45 choices – the gorgonzola pizza puts this stinky cheese to excellent use. Other options include pastas, salads and meat dishes. In summer, a terrace is set up by the canal.

### EASTERN ISLANDS

**A TAVOLA** Map p122 Italian €€  
☎ 625 49 94; Kadijkplein 9; mains €11.50-20; ☎ dinner  
Overlooked by most tourists, this authentic Italian restaurant near the Shipping Museum serves a small but well-chosen menu of meats and pastas that cry out for a selection from its excellent wine list. Even if the service can be a little iffy, the quality of the cooking is consistent and strong. Reservations are a must.



## KOFFIEHUIS VAN DEN VOLKSBOND

Map p122 International €€  
☎ 622 12 09; Kadijkplein 4; mains €11.50-16.50;  
🍴 dinner

This laid-back place began life as a charitable coffee house for dockers, and it still has a fashionably grungy vibe – wood floors, a giant red-rose mural and tall candles on the tables. The ever-changing menu has huge plates of comfort food with ingredients like mussels and *merguez* (a type of spicy sausage), or try the risotto. The Belgian chocolate terrine has fans all over town.

## EASTERN DOCKLANDS

VOORBIJ HET EINDE Map p122 French €€  
☎ 419 11 33; Sumatrakade 613; mains €24, set menus €33-66; 🍴 dinner Wed-Sat

It means 'beyond the end', and on your trek out here to Java Eiland you may begin to question your judgement. Don't. This place, with its supermod architectural interior (frosted glass walls, lots of right angles), wins high praise for high French in high style – the menu changes every month or so.

FIFTEEN Map p122 International €€  
☎ 0900 343 83 36; www.fifteen.nl; Jollemanhof 9; mains €18-22, 4-course set menu with wine €42;  
🍴 dinner

'Naked chef' Jamie Oliver has brought to Amsterdam a concept he began in London: take 15 young people from underprivileged backgrounds and train them for a year in the restaurant biz. Results: noble intention, sometimes spotty execution. The setting, however, is beyond question: Fifteen faces the IJ, and the busy, open-kitchen space is city-cool, with graffitied walls and exposed wood beams.

ODESSA Map p122 International €€  
☎ 419 30 10; www.de-odessa.nl; Veemkade 259; lunch mains €3.40-8, dinner mains €17-22;  
🍴 lunch & dinner

Odessa rocks. Literally. This groovy boat, with indoor and outdoor eating decks and a 1970s-themed 'plush-porno' décor, is just the sort of place where Hugh Hefner would hold a debauched pyjama party – as if to emphasise that fact, DJs take over late at night. The menu changes frequently, and although opinions on food and service run the gamut from 'love it' to 'hate it', there's no denying it's a scene.

GARE DE L'EST Map p122 International €€  
☎ 463 06 20; www.garedelest.nl; Cruquiusweg 9; 4-course set menu €27; 🍴 dinner

Gare de l'Est has both the smallest menu in Amsterdam and also the largest. They say that because four chefs (from traditions including North African, Mediterranean and Asian) take turns nightly in the kitchen, and what their course menus lack in length they make up for in variety over the course of a year. Portuguese tiles and glowing Middle Eastern lamps adorn the interior, and courtyard seating exudes good vibes.

PANAMA Map p122 International €€  
☎ 311 86 89; www.panama.nl; Oostelijke Handelsskade 4; mains €11-18; 🍴 lunch & dinner

The Eastern Harbour's first grown-up restaurant has an enormous, sleek dining room, Mondrian colour scheme and steel light fixtures; it's a good place to fortify yourself before hitting the nightclub on the same premises. Gucci-garbed couples splurge on oysters (in season) and a weekly changing menu of pastas and grills. Wash it down with the – wait for it – Panamartini (vodka, *crema cioccolato*, espresso).

## OOSTERPARK & AROUND

For a whiff of the former Dutch colonies, try the Ekeko restaurant in the Tropenmuseum (p128) or the simple Indonesian and Surinamese takeaways on nearby Linneausstraat and 2e Van Swindenstraat. Further south, the park that embraces the sumptuous Frankendael (p128) is home to one of the Amsterdam's finest restaurants.

DE KAS Map p129 International €€€  
☎ 462 45 62; www.restaurantdekas.nl; Kamerlingh Onneslaan 3, Frankendael Park; 5-course menu €42; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat

Admired by gourmets city-wide, De Kas has an organic attitude to match its chic glass greenhouse setting – try to go during a thunderstorm! It grows most of its own herbs and produce right there (if it's not busy you might be offered a tour), and the result is incredibly pure flavours with innovative combinations. Romantic and tony.

## OUTER DISTRICTS

BLENDER Map pp58-9 French-Mediterranean €€  
☎ 486 98 60; Van der Palmkade 16; mains €18-22;  
🍴 dinner daily, lunch Sat & Sun

Way out west of the Jordaan, Blender's cheeky, curvy, 1970s airport-lounge interior (think lots of orange swivel chairs) is just the place to sip cocktails, sample inventive French-Med food and socialise as DJs spin deep house and soul. People love it and hate it for the same reason (self-conscious hipness), but there's no doubt it's a scene.

BETTY'S Map pp58-9 Vegetarian €€  
☎ 644 58 96; Rijnstraat 75; mains €17-22;  
🍴 lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Wed-Sun

Some consider it the top vegetarian restaurant in the country. The menu's small on any given day, but there's always something new. It's rounded out by tiny tables and a decent wine selection, and everyone says to save room for dessert.

CAFÉ-RESTAURANT AMSTERDAM Map pp58-9 French International €€  
☎ 682 26 66; www.cradam.nl; Watertorenplein 6; mains €10-21; 🍴 lunch & dinner

One of the city's hippest eateries is housed in a former water-processing plant near the Westerpark. Expect classic French brasserie cooking (steak bearnaise, mussels, roasted garlic chicken). Note the 30m-high wooden ceilings (with hanging metal hooks and chains) and the huge floodlights rescued from the former Ajax and Olympic stadiums.

RESTAURANT PS Map pp58-9 International €€  
☎ 421 52 18; www.restaurant.ps; Planciusstraat 49; dinner mains €14-19, 3-course menu €30;  
🍴 dinner Tue-Sat

Run by an unlikely yet vastly experienced pair – an English chef and a Colombian

maitre d' – this new restaurant in the Western Islands, north of the Jordaan, already has an army of devoted fans. Expect reasonable prices, an excellent wine menu and attentive service, plus an artsy interior with mosaics of Venetian glass. The set meals change weekly and feature seasonal ingredients.

PACIFIC PARC Map pp58-9 International €€  
☎ 488 77 78; www.pacificparc.nl; Polonceaukade 23; lunch mains €3.50-10, dinner mains €13.50-17, 3-course menu €25; 🍴 lunch & dinner

Among the many venues in the newly refurbished Westergasfabriek, Pacific Parc is the most established and, arguably, the most interesting. Lunch time is typically sandwiches, pastas and salads, although dinner can get pretty adventurous with selections like ceviche and stuffed lamb shanks. Late at night expect to see DJs and guest performers.

GARY'S MUFFINS Map pp58-9 Bakery €€  
☎ 412 30 25; Kinkerstraat 140; dishes €1.50-4.50;  
🍴 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun

This long-standing bakery serves fresh bagels, chocolate brownies from Gary's grandma's recipe, and sweet and savoury muffins for anyone craving a healthy(ish) minimunch.

SAL MEIJER Map pp58-9 Kosher Deli  
☎ 673 13 13; Scheldestraat 45; dishes €2-5;  
🍴 10am-7.30pm Sun-Thu, 10am-3pm Fri

This kosher delicatessen has little to no atmosphere, but how can you argue with a refrigerator case lined with pretty scoops of salmon, potato and egg salads? Order the heaping corned-beef sandwich – get it warm, you'll thank us. We love the kicky ginger cake for dessert.

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**BLUELIST<sup>1</sup>** (blu,list) v.  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## DRINKING & SMOKING

### top picks

- **Café 't Smalle** (p186)  
*So gezellig:* moor the boat right at your table.
- **Hoppe** (p181)  
An icon of drinking history with a bottomless vat.
- **Café de Jaren** (p185)  
Grandest, most talkative terrace on the Amstel.
- **Brouwerij 't IJ** (p192)  
*Columbus*, a sweet ostrich and a windmill.
- **Het Papeneiland** (p186)  
Cosy tiled café with a secret tunnel story.
- **Kandinsky** (p181)  
Cool-vibe coffeeshop free of Rastas and aliens.
- **Proeflokaal Wijnand Fockinck** (p184)  
Glorious *jenever*s for the dedicated tippler.
- **Café Cuba** (p185)  
A brown café beamed to the Caribbean.
- **Bar Bep** (p181)  
An Eastern European cabaret lounge ca 1950.
- **Dampkring** (p181)  
A hobbit's cave emitting rings of funny smoke.

# DRINKING & SMOKING

Given this city's rep as a wild-running commune of rabid party animals, the first-time visitor may be surprised that Amsterdam is still very much a café society.

A serious and civilised institution, the cafés of any sophisticated metropolis should bring to mind intellectual types hunched over worn tables in blue-smoky rooms, dissecting the eternal themes and poring over newspapers as if they were actually working. While you can still find such folk in the canal city, and certainly plenty of smoke, they're both part of the broader Amsterdam culture – and darn good reasons for in-depth research. Someone's gotta do it, after all!

## SPECIALITIES

### Drinks

Lager beer is the staple, served cool and topped by a two finger-thick head of froth – supposedly to trap the flavour. Requests of 'no head please' will meet with a steely response. *Een bier, een pils* or *een vaas* will get you a normal glass; *een kleintje pils* is a small glass and *een fluitje* is a small, thin, Cologne-style glass. Many places also serve half-litre mugs (*een grote pils*) to please tourists, but somehow draught lager doesn't taste the same in a mug and goes flat if you don't drink quickly.

Popular brands include Heineken, Amstel, Grolsch, Oranjeboom, Dommelsch, Bavaria and the cheap Brouwersbier put out by the Albert Heijn supermarket chain. They contain about 5% alcohol by volume, so a few of those seemingly small glasses can pack quite a wallop. Tasty and stronger Belgian beers, such as Duvel and Westmalle Triple, are also very popular and reasonably priced. *Witbier* ('white beer', eg the Dutch Wieckse Witte, the Belgian Hoegaarden) is a somewhat murky, crisp and citrus-y blonde beer that's drunk in summer with a slice of lemon. The dark, sweet *bokbier* comes out in the autumn. Don't be surprised if the brews sold in supermarkets are not much cheaper than in pubs.

Dutch gin (*jenever*, pronounced 'ya-nay-ver', also *genever*) is made from juniper berries and is drunk chilled from a tiny glass filled to the brim. Most people prefer *jonge* (young) *jenever*, which is smooth and relatively easy to drink; *oude* (old) *jenever* has a strong juniper flavour and can be an acquired taste. A common combination, known as a *kopstoot* (head butt), is a glass of *jenever* with a beer chaser – few people can handle more than two or three of those. Brandy is known as *vieux* or *brandewijn*. There are plenty of indigenous liqueurs, including *advocaat* (a kind of eggnog) and the herb-based *Beerenburg*, a Frisian schnapps.

So long overshadowed by other tipples, wine is drunk by more Dutch than ever before. The average supermarket will stock wines from every corner of Europe (with excellent value from Spain and Bulgaria) and many countries further afield, such as Chile, South Africa and Australia. The most expensive bottle in a supermarket rarely costs more than €8 and will be quite drinkable.

The hot drink of choice is coffee – after all, it was Amsterdam's merchants who introduced coffee to Europe. It should be strong and can be excellent if it's freshly made. If you simply order *koffie* you'll get a sizeable cup of java with a small, airline-style container of *koffiemelk*, similar to unsweetened condensed milk. *Koffie verkeerd* (coffee 'wrong') comes in a bigger cup or mug with plenty of real milk. *Espresso* and *cappuccino* are also available, and most anywhere can accommodate you with decaf. A pleasant Dutch café chain, Coffee Company, has locations throughout town.

Tea is usually served as a cup of hot water with a tea bag. Many places offer a choice of bags. If you want milk, ask '*met melk, graag*' (with milk, please), but many locals add a slice of lemon instead.

Amsterdam tap water is fine but it does have a slight chemical taste – as any waiter will suggest – so mineral and soda waters are popular. Dairy drinks include chocolate milk, *Fristi* (a yogurt drink), *karnemelk* (buttermilk) and of course milk itself. A wide selection of fruit juices and soft drinks is available too.

### Smoking & Soft Drugs

Most cannabis products used to be imported, but today the country has top-notch home produce, so-called *nederwiet* (*nay-der-weet*) developed by horticulturists and grown in greenhouses with up to five harvests a year. Even the police admit it's a superior product,

especially the potent 'super skunk' with up to 13% of THC, the active substance (Nigerian grass has 5% and Colombian 7%). According to a recent government-sponsored poll of coffeeshop owners, *nederwiet* has captured over half the market, and hash is in decline even among tourists.

'Space' cakes and cookies are sold in a rather low-key fashion, mainly because tourists often have problems with them. If you're unused to their effects, or the time they can take to kick in and run their course, you could be in for a rather involved experience.

Some coffeeshops might sell magic mushrooms, that is, if the psychedelic fungi aren't banned by the time you read this. These far-out vendors are the place to go for serious mind-altering products such as cacti, herbal extracts and specialist smokables like dried sage or wild lettuce (see the boxed text, p140). Whatever you decide to purchase, ask the staff how much you should take and *heed their advice*, even if nothing happens after an hour.

## WHERE TO CONSUME

When the Dutch say 'café', they mean a pub, and there are over 1000 of them in the city. More than just drinking houses, cafés are places to go and hang out for hours if you like. Amsterdam has a stunning variety, and some have regular customers or a certain type of clientele that's been coming there for years, if not generations.

Many cafés have outside seating on a *terras* (terrace), glorious in summer, and sometimes covered and heated in winter. These are great places to relax and watch people pass by, soak up the sun, read a paper or write postcards. Most of these cafés serve food as well. Less adventurous chefs get by on soups, sandwiches, salads, *tostis* (ingredients such as cheese and tomato or pesto grilled between two slices of bread) and the like. Cafés that take their food seriously call themselves *etcafés*, and their food can be very good indeed.

There are a number of cafés that don't fit into the descriptions of brown cafés, grand cafés etc that we discuss in the following section; we've described these as 'Other Cafés'.

Remember, there's a *big* difference between a café – which is occasionally called a *koffiehuys*, or 'coffee house' – and a 'coffeeshop'. The latter may have nothing to do with coffee and a lot to do with cannabis (see the

following section). Lighting up in the former will get you a tongue-lashing at best.

Note that relatively few locals frequent the coffeeshops – this is generally something they try as teenagers, and then leave to the tourists (read an insider's view, p193). That said, the atmosphere in coffeeshops can vary sharply, and some have abandoned the spacey 'tune-out, turn-off' pose (eg aliens, Jamaican locks and cartoon fantasies) in lieu of a more mellow New Age vibe, especially outside of the Red Light District.

### Beer Cafés

Beer cafés specialise in the brew, with many seasonal and potent brands on tap and in the bottle. At any one time, some establishments will be stocked with 300 or more varieties, and can offer excellent advice for imbibing.

### Brown Cafés

The most historic and famous type of café is the brown café (*bruin café*). The name comes from the smoke stains from centuries of use (although recent aspirants slap on brown paint to catch up). You may find sand on the wooden floor or Persian rugs on the tables to soak up spilled beer. Some sell snacks or full meals as well. Most importantly: they provide an atmosphere conducive to deep, meaningful conversation – and inducing the nirvana of *gezelligheid* (see p182).

### Coffeeshops

In the Netherlands a coffeeshop is a place that sells cannabis. You'll have no trouble finding one of the 200-odd coffeeshops in Amsterdam, and any place showing palm leaves and Rastafarian colours (red, gold and green) will have something to do with marijuana. Others closely resemble normal cafés.

### Designer Bars

The city's array of watering holes wouldn't be complete without these 'loungey' designer bars. Some are ultramodern, some retro, others shabby-chic with furniture that looks borrowed from somebody's attic.

### Grand Cafés

Grand cafés are spacious, have comfortable furniture and are, well, just grand. A good tradition in many is their indoor reading



table stacked with the day's papers and news magazines, usually with one or two in English. Another difference: they all have food menus, some quite elaborate. They're perfect for a lazy brunch with relaxing chamber music tinkling away in the background.

## Irish Pubs

Amsterdam has its fair share of rollicking pubs from the Emerald Isle, often with live rock or traditional folk music. Most Irish pubs are located around Leidseplein (it teems with them) and Rembrandtplein.

## Tasting Houses

There are also a few tasting houses (*proeflokalen*), on the whole intimate affairs where you can try dozens of *jenever*s and liqueurs. Some are attached to distilleries – a holdover from the 17th century when many small distilleries operated around town – while others are simply affiliated.

## Theatre Cafés

Theatre cafés are normally attached or adjacent to theatres, serving meals before and drinks after performances. Generally they're good places to catch performers after the show, though they're lovely any time of day.

## PRACTICALITIES

The price for a standard beer varies from around €1.25 in the outer suburbs to €2.50 in the popular Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein areas; a mixed drink (eg scotch and Coke) will set you back €3 to €5. Once you've ordered a drink you'll probably be left alone, but you might be expected to top-up. If all tables are occupied, don't be shy about asking to share. If you occupy a table or sit at the bar, it's common to put drinks on a tab and to pay when you leave.

In coffeeshops, you are free to purchase and smoke away. Many coffeeshops also live up to their literal name and serve coffee (as well as beer, other drinks and snacks). There are also a few *hashcafés*. Price and quality are OK; you won't get ripped off in a coffeeshop. Ask at the bar for the list of goods on offer, usually packaged in small bags for €4 to €12; the better the quality, the less the bag will contain. You can also buy ready-made joints in nifty, reusable packaging, a good idea because the stuff can be potent.

## Opening Hours

Cafés serving some kind of breakfast tend to open around 9am or 10am, while others – notably the cosy brown cafés – are late risers, turning on the vats around midday. Closing time tends to be late, between midnight and 1am (as late as 3am on weekends). We've included opening hours where a venue's hours vary from this. Most coffeeshops do business 10am to 1am Sunday to Thursday, and until 3am Friday and Saturday, but a few, particularly in the Red Light District, open as early as 8am. So many joints, so little time...

## CITY CENTRE

When it comes to imbibing and toking, Amsterdam's old centre is the mother lode. The sheer variety of establishments is astounding, and staff expertise is prized so highly that a beer café may poach a barkeeper from a competitor down the street.

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

### CAFÉ HET SCHUIM Map pp62-5 Bar

☎ 638 93 57; Spuistraat 189  
*Schuim* means 'foam' (on beer) and this grungy, arty bar is extraordinarily popular with beer-swilling locals – and it gets packed any time of day or night. While the people-watching can be distracting, it's wise to keep one eye on your belongings.

### GOLLEM Map pp62-5 Beer Café

☎ 626 66 45; Raamsteeg 4  
The pioneer of Amsterdam's beer cafés is a minuscule space covered all over in beer paraphernalia. The 200 beers on tap and in the bottle attract lots of drinkers.

### IN DE WILDEMAN Map pp62-5 Beer Café

☎ 638 23 48; Kolksteeg 3  
This former distillery tasting house has been transformed into an atmospheric yet quiet beer café with over 200 bottled beers, 18 varieties on tap and a smoke-free area. Locals rave about the choice of Trappist ales, the huge selection from Belgium and the Netherlands, and the potent French 'Belzebuth' (13% alcohol!).

### CAFÉ VAN ZUYLEN Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 639 10 55; Torensteeg 4  
Although the sun terrace is one of the prettiest spots for a drink on the Singel, the

interior – with its cosy rooms featuring lots of wood and old leather banquettes – is just as appealing in the cooler months.

### DE SCHUTTER Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 622 46 08; Voetboogstraat 13-15  
This large student *eetcafé* has a brown-café look, a relaxed vibe and inexpensive, tasty *dagschotels* (dishes of the day). It's open for lunch and dinner, and is a good place to fortify yourself on the cheap before a night on the town.

### DE ZWART Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 624 65 11; Spuistraat 334  
'Not everyone has knowledge of beer, but those who have it drink it here', is the translation of the slogan on a panel above this atmospheric bar with the original tile floor from 1921. Just across the alley from Hoppe, De Zwart gets a different (though amicable) crowd of left-wing journalists and writers, as well as local-government people.

### HOPPE Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 420 44 20; Spui 18-20  
Go on. Do your bit to ensure Hoppe maintains one of the highest beer turnovers in the city. Since 1670 drinkers have been enticed behind that velvet curtain into the dark interior to down a few glasses – the entrance is to the right of the pub-with-terrace of the same name. In summer, Hoppe's crowd of boisterous business boys spills over onto the pavement of the Spui.

### OPORTO Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 638 07 02; Zoutsteeg 1  
This tiny brown café is worth visiting just for the inlaid woodwork behind the bar (check out the Zodiac signs). Its wrought-iron-and-parchment lighting fixtures are said to have been the same for 60 years.

### PILSENER CLUB Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 623 17 77; Begijnsteeg 4  
Also known as Engelse Reet (ask the bartender for a translation), this small, narrow and ramshackle place doesn't allow you to do anything but drink and talk, which is what a 'real' brown café is all about. It opened in 1893 and has hardly changed since. Beer comes straight from the kegs in the back, via the 'shortest pipes in

Amsterdam' (most places have vats in a cellar or side room with long hoses to the bar); connoisseurs say they can taste the difference.

### ABRAXAS Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop

☎ 625 57 63; Jonge Roelensteeg 12  
Hands down the most beautiful coffeeshop in town. Choose from southwest USA, Middle Eastern and other styles of décor, spread over three floors. There are live DJs, extrafriendly staff and free internet usage with a drink purchase.

### DAMPKRING Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop

☎ 638 07 05; Handboogstraat 29  
You saw it in *Ocean's Twelve*, now see it up close. Consistently a winner of the Cannabis Cup, Dampkring is darkish, youngish and decorated rather hobbitish. Its name means the ring of the Earth's atmosphere where smaller items combust.

### EL GUAPO Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop

☎ 420 05 42; Nieuwe Nieuwstraat 32  
Sorta Latin, sorta caveman, this shop is populated by friendly people and is known for some of the best hash in town. You can bring your own music and ask them to play it – just remember to get it back when you leave.

### HOMEGROWN FANTASY Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop

☎ 627 56 83; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 87a  
Quality Dutch-grown product, pleasant staff, good tunes and famous space cakes make this popular with backpackers from nearby hostels. Patrons make use of the 3m-long glass bongos to smoke hydroponic weed.

### KANDINSKY Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop

☎ 624 70 23; Rosmarijnsteeg 9  
Those not into the grungy, hippy feel of most Amsterdam coffeeshops love Kandinsky for its clean, contemporary style, funky music, friendly service and infamous space cakes. Alcohol is no longer available (it's the new coffeeshop law, folks) but is readily sold at its café opposite.

### BAR BEP Map pp62-5 Designer Bar

☎ 626 56 49; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 260  
With its olive-green vinyl couches and ruby-red walls, Bep resembles a kitsch,

1950s Eastern European cabaret lounge. It gets groovy with filmmakers, photographers and artists. The heat is off since its heyday, and we prefer it that way.

### **DIEP** Map pp62-5 Designer Bar

☎ 420 20 20; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 256  
Located just next door to Bar Bep, Diep does first-rate quirky decorations. You might find chandeliers made of bubble wrap, a 6ft fibreglass hammerhead shark, illuminated electronic signs above the bar and a similarly creative crowd.

### **CAFÉ DANTE** Map pp62-5 Grand Café

☎ 638 88 39; Spuistraat 320  
This huge Art Deco space is quiet as auntie's back garden during the day, but after 5pm weeknights it transforms into a lively bar for the downtown business crowd. Plus, you get your choice of outside views: the busy Spui out front or the lovely Singel in the back. Upstairs is the [Herman Brood Galerie](#) (p137).

### **LUXEMBOURG** Map pp62-5 Grand Café

☎ 620 62 64; Spui 24  
Join gaggles of glam locals and tourists at this permanently busy café. Grab a paper (from the reading table or the Athenaeum newsagency across the square), procure a sunny seat on the terrace, order the 'Royale' snack platter (bread, cured meats, Dutch cheese and deep-fried croquettes) and watch the world go by. Inside are parquet floors, a marble bar and an Art Deco stained-glass skylight.

### **TARA** Map pp62-5 Irish Pub

☎ 427 46 57; Rokin 85-89  
This expat meeting place combines Irish folksiness with Amsterdam chic. In its maze

of rooms (the one-time home of German expressionist Max Beckmann) you'll find warm fireplaces, a cool bar, gorgeous wall carvings and seats salvaged from an old Irish church. Catch frequent musical happenings and sports on the telly. Meals include Irish stew, and beef and Guinness pie (mains €10.50 to €13.50).

### **B VAN B CAFÉ** Map pp62-5 Other Café

☎ 638 39 14; Beursplein 1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed, 10am-6pm Thu-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun  
The café in the [Beurs van Berlage](#) (p69), one of the city's most spectacular buildings, boasts original brick and tilework, and murals by Jan Toorop (1903) representing past, present and future. Food includes lasagne, croquettes, steaks and the usual assortment of sandwiches and salads. Unless the main building happens to be open to the public (eg concerts), this is your only sure way to get inside.

### **VRANKRIJK** Map pp62-5 Squat Bar

[www.vrankrijk.org](#); Spuistraat 216; ☎ from 9pm  
'Boom!' says the colourful cartoon poster of a façade, till the early '80s a familiar sound in this squatters pad, once the scene of scuffles with police in riot gear. It's mel- lowed a bit but is still active, but more with social-support groups than protests. Monday is Queer Night, and on Thursdays there's 'consultation' for squatters. The interior is still suitably grubby, mainly out of solidarity.

### **DE BLAUWE PARADE**

Map pp62-5 Tasting House

☎ 624 48 60; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 176-180  
The building, now the Hotel Die Poort van Cleve, was the site of the original Heineken brewery, so it seems an appropriate place

for tastings (of *jenever*s though, not beers). While there, feast your eyes on the Delft-blue tile mural (1870s) of a parade of children bearing gifts to an emperor.

### **DE DRIE FLESCHJES**

Map pp62-5 Tasting House

☎ 624 84 43; Gravenstraat 18  
Behind the Nieuwe Kerk, the distiller Bootz's tasting room dates from 1650. It is dominated by 52 vats that are rented out to businesses that entertain clients here. It specialises in liqueurs (although you can also get *jenever*s) – the macaroon liqueur is quite nice. Take a peek at the collection of *kalkoentjes*, small bottles with hand-painted portraits of former mayors.

## **RED LIGHT DISTRICT**

### **DE BUURVROUW** Map pp62-5 Bar

☎ 625 96 54; St Pieterspoortsteeg 29  
This grungy late-night bar is where you inevitably end up when there's nowhere else to go. Take it easy because someone's watching: above the entrance is a bust of *de Buurvrouw* (the woman next door). And yes, everyone is probably as drunk as you. Febo (p169), anyone?

### **CAFÉ ZILT** Map pp62-5 Bar

☎ 421 54 16; Zeedijk 49; ☎ 9.30pm-3am Mon-Thu, 11.30pm-4am Fri & Sat  
This classy little dive is where the corpus delicti shudders to a halt after a night of glorious excess. There's a great selection of seasonal beers (why go easy at this stage?) and bar snacks such as *gehaktbal* (spicy hamburger balls) to buoy the blood sugar.

### **CAFÉ LEF** Map pp62-5 Bar

☎ 421 54 16; Zeedijk 23; ☎ 5pm-1am, Wed-Thu, 2pm-1am Thu-Sun  
This alternative to a blackout at [Café Zilt](#) (above) has a robust wooden bar for slumped conversation and a bottomless pit of Belgian and Dutch brews. Nicholas, the congenial bartender, knows a great cure for the hiccups, and it's completely legal.

### **IN 'T AEPJEN** Map pp62-5 Brown Café

☎ 626 84 01; Zeedijk 1  
This funny little bar, one of the oldest in Amsterdam, got its name 'In the Monkey' from the lice-carrying beasts kept by the

original owner; sailors lodging here left with an itch they could scratch. The story goes that a customer couldn't pay his bill and settled the debt with a monkey. The place is stuffed with old toys and advertising signs.

### **BABA** Map pp62-5 Coffeshop

☎ 624 14 09; [www.babashops.nl](#); Warmoes- straat 64  
Not the cheapest weed in town, but word has it Mike Tyson once took a puff and immediately got walloped. Pick up a bag of Silver Haze, plant yourself at the front window and watch the colourful types all run together along Warmoesstraat. The hash brownies have mother's special touch.

### **GREENHOUSE** Map pp62-5 Coffeshop

☎ 627 17 39; [www.greenhouse.org](#); Oudezijds Voorburgwal 191  
One of the most popular coffeeshops in town. Smokers love the funky music, multicoloured mosaics, psychedelic stained-glass windows and the high-quality weed and hash. The central location near the Dam is a plus.

### **BUBBLES & WINES CHAMPAGNE BAR**

Map pp62-5 Designer Bar

☎ 422 33 18; Nes 37; ☎ 3.30pm-1am Mon-Sat  
Ignore the silly name, this stylish wine bar is a first for Amsterdam: 54 quality wines by the glass, tasting flights (several different wines to try) and the city's most scrumptious bar food: caviar blinis, cheese plates and our favourite, 'bee stings' – parmesan drizzled with white truffle-infused honey.

### **LIME** Map pp62-5 Designer Bar

☎ 639 30 20; Zeedijk 104  
Small but perfectly formed Lime, with its ever-changing, kitsch-cool interior and upbeat grooves, is the perfect preclub pit stop. The DJs and cocktails might just keep you there till morn.

### **DURTY NELLY'S** Map pp62-5 Irish Pub

☎ 638 01 25; Warmoesstraat 117  
Huge, dark and always busy, this pub attracts foreign visitors from the cheap hotels in the area with fun, drinks, darts and pool. It serves a first-rate Irish breakfast and has internet access too.

## **THE ART OF BEING GEZELLIG**

This particularly Dutch quality is one of the best reasons to visit Amsterdam. It's variously translated as snug, friendly, cosy, informal, companionable and convivial, but *gezelligheid* – the state of being *gezellig* – is something more easily experienced than defined. There's a sense of time stopping, an intimacy of the here and now that leaves all your troubles behind, at least until tomorrow. You can get that warm and fuzzy feeling in many places and situations:

- While nursing a brew with friends
- Over coffee and cake with neighbours (the stoop will do)
- Lingering after a meal (the Dutch call this '*natafeleen*')
- Sitting round a beach campfire (or an open hearth)
- A chatty supermarket queue (beats reading *De Telegraaf*)
- Anyplace with candles, sparklers or flashlights

**MOLLY MALONE'S** Map pp62-5 Irish Pub  
☎ 624 11 50; Oudezijds Kolk 9

Regularly packed with Irish folk, this dark, woody pub holds spontaneous folk-music sessions. Bring your own guitar and let loose with the other Eireophiles.

**CAFÉ-RESTAURANT KAPITEIN ZEPPO'S** Map pp62-5 Other Café  
☎ 624 20 57; Gebed Zonder End 5

This site, off Grimburgwal, has assumed many guises over the centuries: a cloister during the 15th, a horse-carriage storehouse in the 17th and a cigar factory in the 19th. These days it's festive, attractive and almost romantic, with a beautiful garden and Belgian beers. There's live music Sunday from 4pm (cover groups and big bands).

**PROEFLOKAAL DE OUIEVAAR** Map pp62-5 Tasting House  
☎ 420 80 04; St Olofspoort 1; ☎ Mon-Sat

Not much bigger than a vat of *jenever*, this magnificent little tasting house has been going since 1782. On offer are spirits of the De Ooievaar distillery, still located in the Jordaan. The house was built leaning over and has not subsided, as many people wrongly assume even before a shot of Old Dutch.

**PROEFLOKAAL WIJNAND FOCKINCK** Map pp62-5 Tasting House  
☎ 639 26 95; Pijlsteeg 31; ☎ 3-9pm

This small tasting house (dating from 1679) has scores of *jenever*s and liqueurs – some quite expensive and potent. It's in an arcade behind Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky,

**HOT CONVERSATION TOPICS**

You're enjoying a beer with friends at a café overlooking a canal. What are you likely to hear?

- 'It took me forever to park my bike!'
- 'What are you getting Jakob and Pieter as a wedding gift?'
- 'I wish I could afford to live in the Canal Belt, but I bought a great flat in Bos en Lommer.'
- 'Let's go for a ride on my boat on Saturday.'
- 'Where's the after-party?'
- 'Sorry, I can't hear you for all the construction noise!'
- 'I wonder if the smoking ban will really be enforced...'
- 'I hope my bike is still there.'

and although there are no seats or stools, it is an intimate place to knock back a taste or two with a friend. We particularly enjoy the *boswandeling* ('walk in the woods'), a vivacious combination of young *jenever*, herb bitters and orange liqueur – the effect is like cloves.

**BLINCKER** Map pp62-5 Theatre Café  
☎ 627 19 38; www.nesttheaters.nl; St Barberenstraat 7-9

The high ceiling, cosy mezzanine and mel-low atmosphere make Blincker a popular theatre café. At the rear of the Frascati Theatre, it gets crammed with a young student crowd having a pre-theatre meal or post-theatre drinks.

**DE BRAKKE GROND** Map pp62-5 Theatre Café  
☎ 626 00 44; Nes 43

Part of the Flemish Cultural Centre, this café overlooking a quiet square does an honest trade in Flemish beer (try a magnum bottle from a Belgian abbey) and homestyle food (think steak *au poivre* or salmon with Ardenens ham).

**NIEUWMARKT DE BEKEERDE SUSTER** Map pp62-5 Beer Café  
☎ 423 01 12; Kloveniersburgwal 6-8

It's got the brew tanks, it's got the beautiful hardwood interior, it's even got the history: a 16th-century brewery-cloister run by nuns. Stop in for a meal of pub grub, or make it a start of an evening on Nieuwmarkt.

**CAFÉ DE DOELEN** Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
☎ 624 90 23; Kloveniersburgwal 125

On a busy canal-side crossroads between the Amstel and the Red Light District, this café dates back to 1895 and looks it: carved wooden goat's head, leaded stained-glass lamps, sand on the floor. Still, it's far from stuffy, there's a fun, youthful atmosphere here, and during fine weather the tables spill across the street for picture-perfect canal views.

**DE SLUYSWACHT** Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
☎ 625 76 11; Jodenbreestraat 1

Listing like a ship in a high wind, this tiny black building was once a lock-keeper's

**I GET AROUND...**

It was only a matter of time before someone combined two legendary Amsterdam pastimes: cycling and beer. **Het Fietscafé** (Bike Café; ☎ 06 5386 4090; www.fietscafé.nl; per hr/day €75/250, plus delivery fee €75-190, 30/50L keg €60/90) is a pedal-powered party, shaped like an open-sided trolley car with a bar down the middle and barstools on either side. Here, though, the barstools sit atop pedals, which you and up to 16 of your mates can use to go anywhere cars can (except highways). Designate a bartender and a driver (who's not allowed to drink), pop your favourite CD in the player, and you're on your way.

house on the Oude Schans. Today, the canal-side terrace is one of the nicest spots we know in town to relax and down a beer (Dommelsch is the house speciality), and it has gorgeous views of the **Montelbaanstoren** (p82).

**LOKAAL 'T LOOSJE** Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
☎ 627 26 35; Nieuwmarkt 32-34

With its beautiful etched-glass windows and tile tableaux on the walls, this is one of the oldest and prettiest cafés in the Nieuwmarkt area. It attracts a vibrant mix of students, locals and tourists

**HILL STREET BLUES** Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop  
www.hill-street-blues.nl; Nieuwmarkt 14

Feels more like a lounge bar than a coffee-shop, with jazz lounge music, an in-the-groove vibe and an international swathe of visitors. Firm beanbag stools and comfy benches make great stations for watching the life forms on busy Nieuwmarkt. Once you've settled in on the terrace, try a blended smoothie with yogurt or fresh fruit, or one of its phenomenal chocolate shakes, a perfect antidote to the munchies.

**CAFÉ-RESTAURANT DANTZIG** Map pp62-5 Grand Café  
☎ 620 90 39; Zwanenburgwal 15

Located in the Stopera building, Dantzig doesn't have the history of some of the other cafés in town, but that doesn't make it any less appealing. The great Amstel-side terrace is always busy in summer, with excellent views over the water and lots of sunlight.

**CAFÉ DE JAREN** Map pp62-5 Grand Café  
☎ 625 57 71; Nieuwe Doelenstraat 20

Watch the Amstel flow by from the balcony and waterside terraces of this

soaring, bright and *very grand* café, one of our favourites. Find a foreign publication at the great reading table and settle down for Sunday brunch (try the smoked-salmon rolls) or an afternoon snack like banana-cream pie.

**CAFÉ CUBA** Map pp62-5 Other Café  
☎ 627 26 35; Nieuwmarkt 3

If a brown café was beamed to the tropical Atlantic, it would probably have Café Cuba's air of faded elegance. Slouch into a table with names etched into it, and quaff blender drinks like mai-tais, planter's punch and the legendary mojito. It may remind you of Hemingway or the Buena Vista Social Club, although we can't help wondering whether Café Cuba's attractive 20- and 30-something crowd has even heard of them.

**WAAG CAFÉ** Map pp62-5 Other Café  
☎ 422 77 72; Nieuwmarkt 4

This former 15th-century *weigh house* (and later, gallows! – see p78) is now an impressive café-restaurant combining old-world accents (massive, circular wrought-iron candelabras) with new-world drinks and food, though it is rather expensive. It serves pretty good sandwiches (we suggest you try the Club) and salads as well, and there's so-not-medieval wireless internet access.

**JORDAAN**

Visitors who seek a typical café experience 'with the locals' will love the Jordaan, a chummy district still touted as the Amsterdam of yore. Of course, the locals may bag a remote table away from curious foreigners, but in this jolly part of town it's just as likely they'll toast your good health and break out in song.



**DE KOE** Map p86

Bar

☎ 625 44 82; Marnixstraat 381

'The Cow' is loved by a 25-plus crowd of locals for its *gezellig* atmosphere, fun pop quizzes, darts tournaments, good (cheap) restaurant and free performances by local rock bands.

**CAFÉ 'T MONUMENTJE**

Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 35 41; Westerstraat 120

Diagonally opposite Café Nol, this slightly scruffy café is always full of barflies, backgammon players and locals. It's a good spot for a beer and a snack after shopping at the Westermarkt.

**CAFÉ 'T SMALLE** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 623 96 17; Egelantiersgracht 12

Take your boat and dock right on 't Smalle's pretty terrace – there's hardly a more convivial setting in the daytime or a more romantic one at night. It's equally charming inside – dating back to 1786 as a *jenever* distillery and tasting house, and restored during the 1970s with antique porcelain beer pumps and lead-framed windows. It's so gorgeous, so authentic, and so Dutch *gezellig*, that there's a reproduction of it in Japan.

**CAFÉ NOL** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 53 80; Westerstraat 109; ☎ 9pm-1am (till 3am Fri &amp; Sat)

The epitome of the old-style Jordaan café, this is sort of place where the original Jordaanese (ie before students, artists and professionals moved in) would sing oompah ballads with drunken abandon. They still do, but nowadays everyone from athletic types to drag queens joins in.

**DE PIEPER** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 626 47 75; Prinsengracht 424

Considered by some customers to be the king of the brown cafés, De Pieper is small, unassuming and unmistakably old (1665). The interior features stained-glass windows, fresh sand on the floors, antique Delft beer mugs hanging from the bar and a working Belgian beer pump (1875). It's a friendly, sweet place for a late-night Wieckse Witte.

**DE PRINS** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 93 82; Prinsengracht 124

Close to the *Anne Frank Huis* (p93), this pleasant and popular brown café prepares good lunch-time sandwiches, a terrific blue-cheese fondue at night, and international dishes like vegetarian wraps.

**DE REIGER** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 74 26; Nieuwe Leliestraat 34

Assiduously local but highly atmospheric, this café has a quiet front bar and a noisy, more spacious dining section at the back serving a short menu (eg steaks or duck with peppercorns).

**DE TUIN** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 45 59; 2e Tuindwarsstraat 13

Always a good place to start the evening. Join the youngish clientele enjoying the wide selection of Belgian beers, good food and funky soul music.

**DE TWEË ZWAANTJES**

Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 625 27 29; Prinsengracht 114; ☎ ring for opening hours

The small, authentic 'Two Swans' is at its hilarious best on weekend nights, when you can join some 100 people belting out torch songs and pop standards. Hours are erratic, so ring ahead first.

**HET PAPENEILAND** Map p86

Brown Café

☎ 624 19 89; Prinsengracht 2

You won't be the only tourist visiting this café, but that doesn't make it any less worthwhile. It's a 1642 gem with Delft-blue tiles and a central stove. The name, 'Papists' Island', goes back to the Reformation when there was a clandestine Catholic church on the north side of the canal. By some accounts you got there via a secret tunnel from the top of the stairs.

**LA TERTULIA** Map p86

Coffeeshop

Prinsengracht 312; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sat

A backpackers' favourite, this mother-and-daughter-run coffeeshop has a greenhouse feel. You can either sit outside by the Van Gogh-inspired murals, play some board games, or take in those Jurassic-sized crystals by the counter.

**NO MORE MUD IN YOUR EYE**

In Amsterdam, if you order a white beer, a soda water, or any cold drink served with a lemon slice, it will almost invariably be served with a plastic stick, like a swizzle stick on one end, with a plastic disc or clover with little spikes sticking out on the other.

The stick is called a *stamper* – sometimes they're referred to as *stampertjes* (little stampers). You use the spiked end to crush the lemon in the bottom of the glass. No more lemon juice in your partner's eye, and no wasted lemon juice either.

**ROKERIJ** Map p86

Coffeeshop

☎ 626 30 60; www.rokerij.net; Elandsgracht 53

The newest member of the Rokerij chain thinks it knows how an Indian living room really looks, with bright blue tiles, orange walls and religious icons. Its clientele is much less touristy than at its outlet near Leidseplein (p190).

**FINCH** Map p86

Designer Bar

☎ 626 24 61; Noordermarkt 5

This funkalicious bar with its retro décor (deliberately mismatched yet somehow harmonious) is just the spot to hang out and knock back a few beers after a visit to the market. It's known for an arty-designy clientele, and lipstick lesbians.

**G-SPOT** Map p86

Designer Bar

☎ 320 37 33; Prinsengracht 422 ☎ 11am-1am

Next door to *De Pieper* (opposite), this contemporary minimalist bar-restaurant with its bright light-filled interior couldn't be more different to its brown-café neighbour, but it's equally as appealing. While the interior is stylish, the canalside terrace with pretty views will keep you outside. Good wines available by the glass.

**PROUST** Map p86

Designer Bar

☎ 623 91 45; Noordermarkt 4

Next door to Finch, this bar is sleek and hip with mod colours, and the crowd changes as the hour does – families in the daytime, students (and older) at night. It's also known for its hot chocolate.

**CAFÉ THIJSSSEN** Map p86

Other Café

☎ 623 89 94; Brouwersgracht 107

The glowing amber, Art Deco-inspired interior with stained-glass windows and big

tables is a crowd-puller. It's busy on weekends with groups of neo-Jordanese yuppies meeting up for a late brunch and staying on until dinner.

**WESTERN CANAL BELT**

The cafés of this refined district tend to have a touch more polish than elsewhere – the interiors are slicker, the brass fittings shinier, the menus more elaborate. The rest of the places just steep themselves in half-lit atmosphere and hope no-one notices.

**'T ARENDSNEST** Map p92

Beer Café

☎ 421 20 57; Herengracht 90

This gorgeous, restyled brown café, with its glowing, copper *jenever* boilers behind the bar, specialises in Dutch beer served by helpful staff. Be sure to try the herby, powerful Jopen Kooyt, brewed from a 1407 recipe.

**CAFÉ DE PELS** Map p92

Brown Café

☎ 622 90 37; Huidenstraat 25; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri &amp; Sat

The action at this appealingly shabby traditional brown café – attracting a mix of students, academics and creative types – is focused on drinking. It's also a Sunday morning breakfast fave.

**CAFÉ HET MOLENPAD** Map p92

Brown Café

☎ 625 96 80; Prinsengracht 653

This place attracts a nice mix of artists – some of whose work adorns the walls of this gallery-café – students and tourists. Lunch is the standard sandwich-and-salad affair, but dinner dishes are more interesting, with a mix of Dutch and Mediterranean flavours.

**DE DOFFER** Map p92

Brown Café

☎ 622 66 86; Prinsstraat 12-14

Writers, students and artists congregate at this popular café (with adjoining bar) for affordable food and good conversation. The dining room, with its old Heineken posters, large wooden tables and, occasionally, fresh flowers, is particularly ambient at night.

**DE II PRINSEN** Map p92

Brown Café

☎ 624 97 22; Prinsstraat 27

With its large windows, chandelier, mosaic floor and big terrace, this café looks

suitably restrained. You may be surprised then by the pumping disco music inside; all those students munching on tasty sandwiches don't seem to mind.

### **VAN PUFFELEN** Map p92 Brown Café

☎ 624 62 70; Prinsengracht 377  
This large café-restaurant, popular among cashed-up professionals and intellectual types, has lots of nooks and crannies for nice, cosy drinks, and big, communal tables for sharing meals like antipasto and large salads.

### **BARNEY'S** Map p92 Coffeeshop

☎ 625 97 61; www.barneys.biz; Haarlemmerstraat 98 & 102  
Ever-popular Barney's is more famous for its enormous all-day breakfasts (€5.70 to €10.50; the traditional Irish is the most popular) than its quality weed and hash. Go figure. Nonsmokers can just go for the food at its café down the block.

### **DUTCH FLOWERS** Map p92 Coffeeshop

☎ 624 76 24; Singel 387  
Were it not for this shop's main wares, you'd be hard pressed to distinguish it from a brown café, with the game on TV and a lovely view of the Singel. It all means that you needn't slum it with the college kids or feel as if you've gone to Jamaica or India in order to enjoy a toke.

### **GREY AREA** Map p92 Coffeeshop

☎ 420 43 01; www.greyarea.nl; Oude Leliestraat 2; ☎ noon-8pm Tue-Sun  
Owned by a couple of laid-back American guys, this tiny shop introduced the extra-sticky, flavoursome 'Double Bubble Gum' weed to the city's smokers. It also keeps up the wonderful American tradition of coffee

refills (it's organic). It keeps shorter hours than most coffeeshops.

### **SIBERIË** Map p92 Coffeeshop

☎ 623 59 09; www.siberie.nl; Brouwersgracht 11  
It's a comfortable, living-room-like setting and the owners are known for supplementing their wares with cultural events like poetry slams, acoustic concerts, DJ nights and even horoscope readings.

### **BRIX** Map p92 Designer Bar

☎ 639 03 51; Wolvenstraat 16  
The mod-lounge setting at this new spot makes it a great place to chill over a beer or enjoy small plates like herring and salmon carpaccio, and chicken lemongrass sticks with banana chutney. There's live jazz Sunday and Monday nights from about 9pm.

### **DYLAN** Map p92 Designer Bar

☎ 530 20 10; Keizersgracht 384  
Like the hotel surrounding it, the Dylan's lobby bar is superposh – sleek black and white with Indonesian influences, and a great place to pose...if you can get in. Restaurant patrons get seating priority. You might swear that all the beautiful people surrounding you stepped off the pages of the fashion magazines on the coffee tables.

### **WOLVENSTRAAT 23** Map p92 Designer Bar

☎ 320 08 43; Wolvenstraat 23; ☎ 9am-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat  
This funky bar with no name – we dare you to find a sign anywhere – is especially popular with locals, who come for the good wines by the glass, great music and tasty Asian snacks. If this is your kind of place, check out their other bar, *Finch* (p187).

### **CAFÉ DE VERGULDE GAPER**

Map p92 Grand Café

☎ 624 89 75; Prinsengracht 30  
Decorated with old chemists bottles and vintage posters, this former pharmacy – popular with locals, and translated as the 'Golden Gaper', for the open-mouthed bust of a Moor traditionally posted at Dutch apothecaries – has amiable staff and a terrace with afternoon sun. It gets busy with 20- and 30-something media types meeting for after-work drinks.

### **DULAC** Map p92 Grand Café

☎ 624 42 65; Haarlemmerstraat 118  
This former bank building is outrageously decked out in a kooky, but kind of spooky, mixture of styles (think Turkish, Art Nouveau and Amsterdam School, with a few Gothic accents). There are DJs Thursday through to Saturday nights, a pool table and an amiable mix of students, older folks and Americans.

### **POMPADOUR** Map p92 Other Café

☎ 623 95 54; Huidenstraat 12  
Join society ladies sipping top-notch tea and nibbling away at homemade Belgian-style chocolates and pastries at this chichi little tearoom in the Negen Straatjes. If you just want the chocolates, they're €4.30 per 100g. Note: it's not open on Sundays, but a second branch is, at *Kerkstraat 148* (Map pp100-1; ☎ 330 09 81).

### **DE ADMIRAAL** Map p92 Tasting House

☎ 625 43 34; Herengracht 319; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat  
The grandest and largest of Amsterdam's tasting houses, De Admiraal is also a restaurant and party venue. Although some grumble that they pour only their own house brands (16 *jenever*s and 60 liqueurs made by Van Wees, an Amsterdam distiller), it's hard to quibble over the lovely setting and pleasant staff.

### **FELIX MERITIS CAFÉ** Map p92 Theatre Café

☎ 626 23 21; Felix Meritis Bldg, Keizersgracht 324  
Join performing artists from around Europe and the city's cultural cognoscenti imbibing in this high-ceilinged, quietly refined room (think theatrical lighting). Huge windows overlooking the canal make it a sunny place for breakfast (from 9am).

## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

Much of the action gravitates towards two of Amsterdam's busy pleasure centres, the shrill squares called Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein. Many locales here feel surprisingly authentic given the tacky surrounds. A more discriminating crowd hits Utrechtsestraat, where you'll find some of the city's most enticing cafes and bars.

### **AMSTEL BAR & BRASSERIE**

Map pp100-1 Bar

☎ 622 60 60; Amstel Intercontinental Hotel, Professor Tulpplein 1  
So you need to entertain a client. She's very high powered and you can't leave things to chance. The bar at the Amstel Intercontinental Hotel is dignified and appropriately clubby, and its river-view location is the power spot in town. We expect you'll get that contract you wanted and you may even rub elbows with famous financiers for your next deal.

### **EYLDERS** Map pp100-1 Brown Café

☎ 624 27 04; Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 47  
During WWII, Eylders was a meeting place for artists who refused to toe the cultural line imposed by the Nazis, and the spirit lingers on. It's still an artists café with exhibits, and makes a quiet retreat from the Leidseplein.

### **OOSTERLING** Map pp100-1 Brown Café

☎ 623 41 40; Utrechtsestraat 140  
Opened in the 1700s as a tea and coffee outlet for the United East India Company, Oosterling is as authentic as it gets – run by the same family since 1877. These days it's packed with the after-work-drinks crowd from the bank across the square and is one of the very few cafes that has a bottle-shop (liquor-store) permit.

### **BULLDOG** Map pp100-1 Coffeeshop

☎ 625 62 78; www.bulldog.nl; Leidseplein 13-17  
Amsterdam's most famous coffeeshop chain has evolved into its own empire, with multiple locations (some double as cafes), a hotel, bike rental, even its own brand of energy drink. This flagship location on the Leidseplein is in a former police station. How times have changed.

## TO SPLIFF OR NOT TO SPLIFF? THAT WAS THE QUESTION

Well, not exactly, but we couldn't resist the title.

At the beginning of this century, the Dutch health ministry announced that smoking would eventually be banned in bars, cafes, restaurants and nightclubs around the country. A lively debate followed between the government and the hospitality industry, which finally agreed to a voluntary phase-in of a ban. Many places remained so smoke-friendly, however, that Health Minister Ad Klink finally lost patience and had a ban imposed effective from mid-2008 including, believe it or not, the hazy realm of the coffeeshops. Puffers needn't despair too much, for they can still light up in closed-off rooms without waiting service. Café owners will supposedly face stiff fines for violations, but for now, take a deep breath, sit back and see how (and if) the law is enforced.

**GLOBAL CHILLAGE** Map pp100-1 *Coffeeshop*  
☎ 777 97 77; www.globalchillage.com;  
Kerkstraat 51

This relaxed shop with friendly staff looks like a little forest with trippy murals and chilled-out music (from African and jazzy beats), populated by happy smokers relaxing on comfortable couches.

**ROKERIJ** Map pp100-1 *Coffeeshop*  
☎ 622 94 42; www.rokerij.net; Lange  
Leidsewarstraat 41

Behind this black hole of an entrance you'll find Eastern décor and candlelight for those tired of the Rastafarian vibe. Staff at this flagship branch have a reputation for friendliness, explaining why outlets have shot up like weed(s). Others include the Jordaan (p187).

**DE HUYSCHAEMER** *Designer Bar*  
Map pp100-1

☎ 627 05 75; Utrechtsestraat 137  
A one-time restaurant, De Huyschkaemer has made the transition to a full-time designer bar, with a mixed crowd – gay and straight, expat and local, old and young. The setting is minimalist, with spare walls and booths.

**KAMER 401** Map pp100-1 *Designer Bar*  
☎ 422 44 53; Marnixstraat 401; ☎ 4pm-1am  
Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat

This glamorous bar glows at night, as do the gorgeous-looking cocktail-drinking young locals who pack the place till late. With DJs providing a funky soundtrack, it's perfect for preclubbing drinks.

**LUX** Map pp100-1 *Designer Bar*  
☎ 422 14 12; Marnixstraat 403; ☎ 8pm-3am  
Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat

One of several happening bars along this street, attracting beautiful young Amsterdammers and expats-in-the-know – good DJs keep the crowds happy and the bar staff very, very busy.

**SUZU WONG** Map pp100-1 *Designer Bar*  
☎ 626 67 69; Korte Leidsewarstraat 45

This sure-to-impress bar bustles with Dutch trends and actors. The look? Victorian-drawing-room-on-speed, with red velvet-een wallpaper and a bamboo garden; a

photo of Andy Warhol observes. A worthy place to fortify yourself before heading across to **Jimmy Woo's** (p197).

**WEBER** Map pp100-1 *Designer Bar*  
☎ 627 05 74; Marnixstraat 397; ☎ 8pm-3am  
Mon-Thu, to 4am Fri-Sun

We love this buzzy bar for its loud indie music, retro décor and unpretentious local vibe. Cheap drinks and friendly service are an added incentive to head here on a Saturday night – if you can squeeze in!

**CAFÉ AMERICAIN** Map pp100-1 *Grand Café*  
☎ 556 32 32; Amsterdam American Hotel,  
Leidsekaade 97

This Art Deco monument, opened in 1902, was a grand café before the concept even existed, with huge stained-glass windows overlooking Leidseplein, a lovely, library-like reading table and a great terrace.

**DE KROON** Map pp100-1 *Grand Café*

☎ 625 20 11; Rembrandtplein 17-1  
A popular venue for media events and movie-premiere parties, with high ceilings, velvet chairs, and the chance to wave at the Little People below on the Rembrandtplein. There is a lift to get up the two storeys, but climb the two flights instead and you'll be rewarded with an Art Deco tiled staircase.

**MULLIGANS** Map pp100-1 *Irish Pub*  
☎ 622 13 30; Amstel 100

This is probably the most 'authentic' Irish pub, at least music-wise. There's a congenial atmosphere, Guinness on tap and live Irish music most nights from 9pm (no cover charge). Sunday *sesiàns* let you participate. BYOI (instrument) and T (talent).

**HERBERG HOOGHOUDT** *Other Café*  
Map pp100-1

☎ 420 40 41; Reguliersgracht 11; Mon-Sat 4pm-midnight

Situated on lovely Reguliersgracht, this venerable café still bears the hallmarks of the Hooghoudt Distillery founded in Groningen in the late 19th century. You can try a gamut of *jenever*s, liqueurs and vodkas, or warm up with a *korenwijn* right out of a barrel on the bar. Note the earthenware pots still used to give the firewater its special flavour.

## PLACES TO PLAY

You'll have ample opportunity for mind games at Amsterdam's bars and clubs, but for something more traditional, try one of the following. Some are pretty down-and-dirty. Hours vary, but these places generally open from early afternoon through the evening.

- **Snookerclub Final Touch** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 620 92 52; Prinsengracht 735) This two-storey spot with six snooker tables and five pool tables feels studenty but gets a mixed crowd. Other games include backgammon, darts and chess.
- **Snookerclub De Keizers** (Map p92; ☎ 623 15 86; Keizersgracht 256) De Keizers' five storeys feel like something out of *The Shining*; it's a once-grand 18th-century canal house whose huge rooms now contain just one or two tables each. You can get drinks and bar snacks, and it's always pretty quiet. It's bittersweet to see such faded glory; on the other hand, it's sooooo cool that it exists.
- **Café de Laurierboom** (Map p86; ☎ 623 30 15; Laurierstraat 76) The hub of the Jordaan chess circuit is one of its oldest cafés, still bearing a stone tablet labelled *tapperij en slijterij*. From 3pm the local masters test their wits over a drinkie or three.
- **Max Euweplein** (Map pp100-1) Enthusiastic chess players can play and schmooze around the oversized outdoor chessboard.

**JANVIER** Map pp100-1 *Other Café*  
☎ 626 1199; Amstelveld 12

There's no lovelier place to sit on a sunny afternoon than under the shady plane trees at this stylish bar-restaurant. Stick to a drink and snacks (the food can be hit and miss) and watch the kids kick a football around in this pleasant down-to-earth neighbourhood.

**TWINS BACKSTAGE** Map pp100-1 *Other Café*  
☎ 622 36 38; Utrechtsewarstraat 67

The twins Greg and Gary Christmas once had a song-and-dance act, and in the 1970s they opened this café as a sideline. Greg passed away several years ago, and Gary keeps things going with substantial help from the neighbours. Don't expect crisp service or top-notch food, but do expect encompassing kitsch, from mannequins in crocheted shawls to flower-power decals. No matter your sexual orientation, you'll find a titillating photo on the wash-room wall.

**CAFÉ SCHILLER** Map pp100-1 *Theatre Café*  
☎ 624 98 46; Rembrandtplein 26

Most cafés would pay a fortune to have Schiller's fabulous Deco interior, but this is original. Walls are lined with portraits of Dutch actors and cabaret artists from the 1920s and '30s. Bar stools and booths are often occupied by tipling journalists and artists, and folks tucking into pre- and post-theatre menus.

**DE BALIE** Map pp100-1 *Theatre Café*  
☎ 623 36 73; Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 10

In the Balie performance space, lovely Deco-meets-industrial design attracts a diverse crowd of artists, politicians, journalists, actors, filmmakers and anyone else looking for a decent lunch.

**DE SMOESHAAN** Map pp100-1 *Theatre Café*  
☎ 625 03 68; Leidsekaade 90

Theater Bellevue's café gets pretty lively, both before and after the shows, with theatre visitors and performers. During the day it's a nice place to relax by the Singelgracht. The pub food is better than it needs to be (try the *gehakt* at lunch time) and there's a good full-on restaurant upstairs too (restaurant closed July to mid-August).

## OLD SOUTH

'Old anything' in a label tends to impress. The cafés in the Old South marry a 1920s social conscience with Dutch understatement that still says 'I've arrived'. The result is classic period cafés with a wonderful ambience of leisure that's taken for granted, like what cultured folk should expect anyway.

**WILDSCHUT** Map p110 *Brown Café*  
☎ 676 82 20; Roelof Hartplein 1

A real gathering place for the Old South. When the weather's warm, pretty much everyone heads to the terrace, with views of the Amsterdam School buildings. And



when the weather's not great, soak up the atmosphere in the Art Deco interior.

## VONDELPARK & AROUND

The scene here revolves around the handful of old-style cafés in the city's most popular park – wonderful places to cool your heels after a stroll round the pond-filled grounds. The spacey-looking 't Blauwe Theehuis (p171) is as famous for coffee and cake as its generous lunch and dinner mains.

### HET GROOT MELKHUIS

Map p116 Other Café

☎ 612 96 74; Vondelpark 2  
Kind of a Goldilocks apparition, this huge thatched house at the forest's edge invites you in. The huge dining forecourt, playground and amazing selection of chewing gum machines cater to families and all kidlike guests.

### CAFÉ VERTIGO

Map p116 Theatre Café

☎ 612 30 21; Vondelpark 3  
Bonus: this is both a theatre café (at the main hall of the [Filmmuseum](#), p115) and, in nice weather, a great place to linger outdoors watching the cyclists and families go by in the Vondelpark. Try the *uitsmijter* Vertigo (egg sandwich with bacon, mushrooms, tomato and melted cheese, €7.50).

## DE PIJP

The neighbourhood that houses the old Heineken Brewery (p118) is chock-full with watering holes that few tourists discover, being well off the beaten track. For a good solid pub crawl, start with the enthusiastic after-work crowd on Gerard Douplein and drink your way south towards Sarphatipark.

### PILSVOGEL

Map p119 Brown Café

☎ 664 64 83; Gerard Douplein 14  
The kitchen dispenses small plates (€2.50 to €4.50) and *dagschotels* (€11.50) to a 20-something crowd, but that's really secondary when you're sitting on De Pijp's loveliest, busiest corner. Watch the world go by, or at least its ambassadors.

### SARPHAAT

Map p119 Brown Café

☎ 675 15 65; Ceintuurbaan 157  
Grab an outdoor table by the Sarphatipark, tuck into a slice of Boston cheesecake and a coffee, and see if you don't feel like a local.

### 18 TWINTIG

Map p119 Designer Bar

☎ 470 06 51; Ferdinand Bolstraat 18-20  
This bar facing Marie Heinekenplein is all pastels, mints and tiny Buddhas to make anyone look glam, not that the good-looking 20- and 30-somethings need enhancement. There's a contemporary, diverse food menu (mains €16.50 to €21.50).

### BAR ÇA

Map p119 Designer Bar

☎ 470 41 44; Marie Heinekenplein 30-31  
One of the hottest cafés in town, this club themed like a 'Barcelona in Amsterdam' has brought real life to Marie Heinekenplein. Hang in the posh plush-red and darkwood interior, or spread out onto the terrace.

## PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

In keeping with all the daring architecture out here, the Plantage, Eastern Islands and Eastern Docklands area has seen an invasion of back-lit designer bars and media-savvy cafés, and we've listed those that meld mod style with good ol' Dutch *gezelligheid*. Among the more traditional places, the venerable Brouwerij 't IJ has tasty brews that are a definite highlight.

### BROUWERIJ 'T IJ

Map p122 Beer Café

☎ 622 83 25; Funenkade 7; ☎ 3-8pm Wed-Sun  
The tasting room of Amsterdam's leading microbrewery has a cosy, down-and-dirty beer-hall feel (walls lined with dried hops and bottles from around the world) and the house brew is on tap. In nice weather you can enjoy your beer on the terrace at the foot of the De Gooyer Windmill (p124). Where better to sample a Columbus (9%), a *zatte* ('drunk') or a sweet, orange-coloured *struis* (ostrich)?

## SMOKY TOWN LIVING

Peter Vloot, 45, is an artist and skipper born in Osdorp, a western suburb of Amsterdam. He now lives in the Western Islands north of the Jordaan. We asked Peter to give us the skinny on dope-smoking tourists, police searches and the arts scene, as well as his past life as a squatter.

### Do you have much contact with the tourists in the city?

Well, I used to drive a water taxi in town and now I'm a skipper, taking passengers and tourists around town.

### Do you find it a pain that a lot of tourists come to Amsterdam just to party, drink and smoke dope?

I'm always surprised when my friends come up from Switzerland and smoke much more in Amsterdam than they do at home. But there it's illegal. When you're born here it seems normal, so I'm used to it and it doesn't really bother me. But if it bothers you, you might as well stay away from the city centre. Most residents don't ride their bicycles along the Rokin and the Damrak anyway!

### Do you think preventative frisking by police on the street is a good thing?

No. I think it's idiotic, and disappointing that it's happening in Amsterdam. It's like the issue of carrying identity cards – going back to the Second World War, we never considered ID cards until the Germans forced it upon us – and then we allow it now. And we allow preventative searches and let ourselves be fobbed off with lists of statistics on illegal weapons. When you've got a few thousand people on the street to choose from, they'll always find something.

### What's special about Amsterdam for artists?

There's so much going on. The moment that you say, you want to make art your living, you've got the greatest chance of success in Amsterdam. There's an art to the way the city is constantly changing. As older neighbourhoods were being cleaned up, the buildings became a kind of breeding ground, and you could use their rooms as an artist or squatter. But these places are disappearing.

### What was it like being a squatter?

Easy. Someone moved out and I moved in. When I was squatting in 1983, I lived in what was known as the most dangerous street in Amsterdam. There were clashes among the dealers and junkies, fires were set and so on. When I told my landlord I was going to pay rent, and it was a tiny amount in the '80s, he said, 'Oh, that's great!' Because I was a squatter but not aggressive, he was happy to hear it. And then I lived there for 20 years. Now it's a school, and part of a renovation project.

### CAFÉ KOOSJE

Map p122 Brown Café

☎ 320 08 17; Plantage Middenlaan 37  
If the three catch-words for real estate are location, location and location, then Koosje's got a lock on the market, between the [Artis Zoo](#) (p121) and the [Hollandsche Schouwburg](#) (p123). There are lots of windows to watch the action outside, a great corner vibe, and small plates and sandwiches, most under €6.

### KHL

Map p122 Other Café

☎ 779 15 75; Oostelijke Handelskade 44  
Proof of how far this district has come, KHL is a one-time squatter café gone legit. Next to the Lloyd Hotel, it's a historic brick building with great tilework, and the garden is worth a glass or two. There's often music on weekends – everything from Latin to pop to Klezmer.

### BLOEM

Map p122 Other Café

☎ 330 09 29; Entrepotdok 36  
You've always wanted to see those lovely buildings of the Entrepotdok from the inside? Now you can, at this dark and cosy café-restaurant. Amid the brick and beams, enjoy a beer or a coffee, and meals are better than they need to be (lunch around €7, three-course menus around €20).

### STAR FERRY

Map p122 Theatre Café

☎ 788 20 90; Piet Heinkade 1  
It's practically a commandment nowadays that any newly built performing space worth the name has to have a flash café, and the café at the new Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ is hard to beat for location and views. Several storeys of glass give you an IJ's-eye perspective.

## OOSTERPARK & AROUND

As the capital of a seafaring nation, Amsterdam has no shortage of riverside cafés that remind you of the age-old Dutch bond with H2O. On gorgeous summer evenings many patrons arrive by boat, settle at a terrace table and watch the freight barges, tugs and rowing teams ply the waters of the Amstel or the IJ.

### AMSTEL HAVEN Map p129

Other Café

☎ 665 26 72; Mauritskade 1

Bike or boat up to where the Amstel meets the Singelgracht, snag a canalside table under an umbrella, and have yourself a swell view of the water and skyscrapers. Daytimes, munch on *uitsmijters*, sandwiches and mains, and on weekend nights, the dining room becomes a dance floor with DJs or live music.

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**BLUELIST**<sup>1</sup> (blu,list) v.  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

### top picks

- **Bitterzoet** (p196)  
Fresh, exciting dance club that changes its spots nightly.
- **Concertgebouw** (p199)  
World-renowned concert hall with superb acoustics.
- **Escape** (p196)  
Fabulously flashy 'n trashy nightclub on Rembrandtplein.
- **Melkweg** (p199)  
The stars come out at this restless Leidseplein nightspot.
- **Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ** (p200)  
Stunning high-tech temple of the performing arts.
- **Muziektheater** (p200)  
Crossroads of global opera and choreography.
- **Panama** (p197)  
Cool jazz, hot Latin and scores of beautiful, jiggy patrons.
- **Paradiso** (p199)  
One-time church that preaches a gospel of rock.
- **Sugar Factory** (p197)  
Creative theme nights that hit all the sweet spots.
- **Tuschinski theater** (p200)  
Dazzling Art Deco jewel with a silver screen.



# NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

Amsterdam's entertainment scene is wonderfully easy-going and remarkably diverse for a city of its size. It may not be as sophisticated as some European cities – minimalist interiors are still a fairly new concept – but the soft entry to most venues, apart from a few nightclubs, is refreshing. Dress is for the most part casual, and people won't blink if you wear jeans to the opera. This place always feels familiar, like a cosmopolitan village where everyone knows one another.

There are loads of big concert halls, theatres, cinemas and other performance venues. Generous subsidies help support a flourishing arts scene with world-renowned orchestras, as well as ballet and opera. The city really comes alive when there's open-air entertainment in the parks and streets, and along the canals.

## CLUBBING

Much of the action takes place in the city centre and Southern Canal Belt, but locals may prefer the large, glitzy venues outside town. Most nightclubs close at 4am on Thursday and Sunday and 5am on Friday and Saturday. Looking for the after-party? Keep an eye out for flyers at record shops and clubwear stores.

If there's a bouncer, you may have to pass muster; entry rules are supposed to be posted after a member of the Dutch parliament was recently denied admission. Entry fees can be as much as €20. Others are free, in which case you should slip the doorman a couple of euros as you leave.

### BITTERZOET [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 521 30 01; [www.bitterzoet.com](#); **Spuistraat 2**  
Always full, always changing. This is the freshest, friendliest and best-regarded among the newer venues – different nights might see pulse, roots, drum'n'bass, Latin, Afro-beat, Old School jazz or hip-hop groove.

### IJ LOVE THE NIGHTLIFE

Can't afford Ibiza this year? Don't worry. Amsterdam's club promoters have come up with the next best thing: beach parties on the canals and waterways.

A 'beach' can be anything from a glorified playpen (such as atop the NEMO science museum, [p69](#)) to huge golden expanses of sand trucked in every year.

One jaw-dropping sand-blast is **Blijburg** ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 416 03 30; [www.blijburg.nl](#)), in the fast-growing IJburg suburb east of the city centre. Parties here hook anything from jazz to hippie scene, trance or singer-songwriter soirée. Tram 26 gets you there from Centraal Station in 15 minutes.

Other beaches include **Strand West** ([Map pp58-9](#); [www.strand-west.nl](#)), off Sparndammerstraat (take tram 22 from Centraal Station) and **Amsterdam Plage** ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 06 4601 6005; [www.amsterdamplage.nl](#)), a few hundred metres from Centraal Station – walk or take tram 3 to Zoutkeetsgracht. When the weather cooperates, the good folks at Supper Club ([p158](#)) also operate the Supper Club Cruise Oase, a catered cruise around the IJ with performance art.

### DANSEN BIJ JANSEN [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 620 17 79; [www.dansenbijjansen.nl](#);  
**Handboogstraat 11**

For over a generation, this rambling space has been Amsterdam's most famous student nightclub, and it still thumps nightly on two sweaty floors. The secret? Cheap drinks, a fun selection of classic disco and house, and a relaxed dress code. Valid student cards are required.

### ESCAPE [Map pp100-1](#)

☎ 622 11 11; [www.escape.nl](#); **Rembrandtplein 11**  
A fixture of Amsterdam nightlife for two decades, the lights and video screens are even slicker since a 2007 revamp. First Friday of the month is Salvation, one of Amsterdam's leading gay dance nights.

### ODEON [Map pp100-1](#)

☎ 521 85 55; [www.odeonamsterdam.nl](#); **Singel 460**  
This historic venue from the 1660s was given a top-to-toe glam renovation in 2005, complete with murals of glam models. Club

## FIND IT, BOOK IT

To find out what's on offer, pick up the *Amsterdam Weekly* or the Dutch-language *Uitkrant, NL20* and the *PS* weekend supplement in *Het Parool* newspaper. Another good source is the **Amsterdams Uitburo** (AUB; [www.aub.nl](#), click on 'programma' for the calendar).

You can purchase tickets from the venues directly; box-office hours are roughly 10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday and an hour before performances. You can also buy tickets (with a surcharge) via the **AUB Ticketshop** ([Map pp100-1](#); ☎ 0900 01 91, per min €0.40; [www.aub.nl](#); cnr Leidsestraat & Marnixstraat); ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-7.30pm Sun). **Ticket Service** (☎ 0900 300 12 50, per min €0.45; [www.ticketservice.nl](#)) and **Top Ticketline** (☎ 0900 300 50 00; [www.topticketline.nl](#)) may also be able to help.

The AUB Ticketshop also sells half-price tickets on the day of performance; see [www.lastminuteticketshop.nl](#).

nights and concerts are held in the grand hall upstairs.

### PANAMA [Map p122](#)

☎ 311 86 86; [www.panama.nl](#); **Oostelijke Handelskade 4**

A brilliant venue aimed at 25- to 35-year-olds, Panama has a salsa-tango dance salon and glamorous nightclub that spins Latin, Ibiza vibes, Cuban big bands and more.

### SUGAR FACTORY [Map pp100-1](#)

☎ 626 50 06; [www.sugarfactory.nl](#);  
**Lijnbaansgracht 238**

A cool spot, an excellent location and a varied line-up are the hallmarks here. Most nights start with music, cinema or spoken word performances, followed by late-night DJs and dancing.

### TO NIGHT [Map p129](#)

☎ 694 74 44; [www.hotelarena.nl](#); **Hotel Arena, 's-Gravesandestraat 51**

In keeping with the club's name, each night is different – everything from dance classics to salsa. The interior is magnificent, the chapel of a one-time orphanage.

### VAKZUID [Map pp58-9](#)

☎ 570 84 00; [www.vakzuid.nl](#); **Olympic Stadium 35**

A glamorous club-restaurant at the 1928 Olympic Stadium, Vakzuid has a large dance floor and loads of comfortable lounges to pose on. There's a lot of house, with some '80s and disco thrown in for good measure.

### WESTERGASTERRAS [Map pp58-9](#)

☎ 475 14 12; [www.westergasterras.nl](#);  
**Klönneplein 4**

This cool, postindustrial, indoor-outdoor space is screamingly popular on Fridays

for theme nights such as Tropical, and the pace hardly slows the rest of the week. Make an evening of it: dinner or a movie at the Westergasfabriek, and then hit the club.

### WINSTON KINGDOM [Map pp62-5](#)

☎ 623 13 80; [www.winston.nl](#); **Hotel Winston, Warmoesstraat 127**

Changing theme nights (think the 'sexy, trashy and suave' Club Vegas on Sundays) and a fine line-up of local DJs make Winston very hip, very cool and very Amsterdam.

Also recommended:

**De Nieuwe Anita** ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 415 035 12; [www.deniuewanita.nl](#)); Frederik Hendrikstraat 111) Living-room venue expanded for noisierockers, with a great café.

**Jimmy Woo** ([Map pp100-1](#); ☎ 626 31 50; [www.jimmywoo.com](#); Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 18) Platform for the young and beautiful, with fab light-and-sound shows.

**Powerzone** ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 0900 769 37 96; [www.thepowerzone.nl](#); Daniel Goedkoopstraat 1-3) Multilevel dance factory with a DJ in every corner. Take the metro to Spaklerweg.

## ROCK, JAZZ & BLUES

At most venues you can just turn up at the door, but you might want to book ahead for famous acts (see [above](#)).

Jazz is popular and there's a lot of it happening in cafés; blues thrives less. The world's largest jazz festival is the North Sea Jazz Festival, held in Rotterdam every July ([p18](#)).

### BIMHUIS [Map p122](#)

☎ 788 21 50; [www.bimhuis.nl](#); **Piet Heinkade 3**

The Bimhuis is the beating jazz heart of the Netherlands, and its stylish new digs at the **Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ** ([p200](#)) draws international jazz greats like Branford Marsalis.

## BOURBON STREET JAZZ & BLUES CLUB

Map pp100-1

☎ 623 34 40; [www.bourbonstreet.nl](http://www.bourbonstreet.nl); Leidsekruisstraat 6-8; 🕒 10pm-4am Sun-Thu, 10pm-5am Fri & Sat

Catch blues, funk, soul and rock'n'roll in this intimate venue, visited by the likes of Sting and departed Dutch rocker Herman Brood (see p137). Ages 23 and up.

## BRASIL MUSIC BAR

Map pp100-1

☎ 626 15 00; [www.brasilmusicbar.com](http://www.brasilmusicbar.com); Lange Leidsedwardsstraat 68-70

Get jiggy to live Brazilian and Caribbean music three nights a week, and R&B and DJs at other times. The club, like the dancing, is hot and steamy.

## CASABLANCA

Map pp62-5

☎ 625 56 85; [www.casablanca-amsterdam.nl](http://www.casablanca-amsterdam.nl); Zeedijk 26

Even if its glory days are over, this venerable jazz café hosts big bands four nights a week and other jazz the rest of the time.

## COTTON CLUB

Map pp62-5

☎ 626 61 92; Nieuwmarkt 5

Squish into this dark, bustling brown café every Saturday (5pm to 8pm) for live, vibrant jazz. It has a storied history, and salsa on Tuesdays.

## DE HEEREN VAN AEMSTEL

Map pp100-1

☎ 620 21 73; [www.deheerenvanaemstel.nl](http://www.deheerenvanaemstel.nl); Thorbeckeplein 5

Office workers and students cram into this grand café-style club to enjoy the roster of live big bands and pop and rock coverbands.

## JAZZ CAFÉ ALTO

Map pp100-1

☎ 626 32 49; [www.jazz-cafe-alto.nl](http://www.jazz-cafe-alto.nl); Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 115; 🕒 9pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat

You'll enjoy serious jazz and blues at this respected café near Leidseplein. Try to catch tenor saxophonist Hans Dulfer, father of Candy Dulfer (of Prince and Van Morrison fame).

## KORSAKOFF

Map p86

☎ 625 78 54; [www.korsakoffamsterdam.nl](http://www.korsakoffamsterdam.nl); Lijnbaansgracht 161; 🕒 from 10pm

Going since the late '80s and still grungy after all these years, this hard-rock and

## THE WORLD'S ULTIMATE PICKUP LINE

Apart from his duties as international beer magnate, Freddy Heineken (1924–2002) had a reputation for being a ladies' man. As the story goes, an attractive young female approached the bar and uttered the familiar phrase: 'I'd like a Heineken, please.' Freddy (stationed nearby) replied: 'I'm right here.'

alternative-music venue attracts a young clientele for lashings of punk, metal and goth.

## LISBOA

Map p122

☎ 622 12 72; Veemkade 251

At weekends, this restaurant-club boat moored behind the C1000 supermarket hosts jazz artists such as trumpeter Saskia Laroo and Brazilian samba bands.

## MALOE MELO

Map p86

☎ 420 45 92; [www.maloemelo.com](http://www.maloemelo.com); Lijnbaansgracht 163

This is the altar of Amsterdam's tiny blues scene, just a few blocks from Leidseplein. There's everything from Cajun zydeco and swing to Texas blues and rockabilly.

Also recommended:

**Heineken Music Hall** (☎ 0900 687 42 42; [www.heineken-music-hall.nl](http://www.heineken-music-hall.nl); Arena Blvd 590, Bijlmermeer) Midsized venue praised for its quality acoustics and lighting.

**Pepsi stage** (☎ 0900 737 74 78; [www.pepsistage.nl](http://www.pepsistage.nl); Arena Blvd 584, Bijlmermeer) Draws acts like Elvis Costello, Sarah McLachlan and the Gypsy Kings.

## WORLD MUSIC

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam is a natural breeding ground for world music. Apart from the venues listed here, look into Melkweg (opposite), Paradiso (opposite) and the Latin bars that give toned bodies another place to sweat gracefully.

## AKHNATON

Map pp62-5

☎ 624 33 96; [www.akhnaton.nl](http://www.akhnaton.nl); Nieuwezijds Kolk 25

A young, multicultural crowd jams this club to catch live hip-hop, Latin and Afro-centric acts. It's been going strong for 50 years.

## DE BADCUYP

Map p119

☎ 675 96 69; [www.badcuyp.nl](http://www.badcuyp.nl); 1e Sweelinckstraat 10

A low-key and very cool venue off the Albert Cuypmarkt, De Badcuyp has regular World Jam and Open *Kuip* (open mic) nights, African dance cafés and musical offerings including South Indian, jazz and Latin.

## TROPENINSTITUUT THEATER

Map p129

☎ 568 85 00; [www.kit.nl](http://www.kit.nl); Tropenmuseum, Linnaeusstraat 2

The live agenda is like no place else in Amsterdam, mainly South American, Indian and African music, films and offerings like Japanese geisha.

## CLASSICAL MUSIC

Amsterdam's classical music scene, with fine international orchestras, conductors and soloists crowding the agenda, is the envy of many European cities. It also has a tradition of free lunchtime concerts, from 12.30pm at the Concertgebouw, except in summer.

## BETHANIËNKLOOSTER

Map pp62-5

☎ 625 00 78; [www.bethanienklooster.nl](http://www.bethanienklooster.nl); Barndesteeg 6b

This former monastery near Nieuwmarkt has a glorious ballroom, the perfect place to take in some Stravinsky or Indian sitar.

## BEURS VAN BERLAGE

Map pp62-5

☎ 627 04 66; [www.beursvanberlage.nl](http://www.beursvanberlage.nl); Damrak 243 The renowned **old commodities exchange** (p69) has two small concert halls with comfortable

seats and so-so acoustics. The Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and the Netherlands Philharmonic are the resident companies.

## CONCERTGEBOUW

Map p110

☎ 671 83 45; [www.concertgebouw.nl](http://www.concertgebouw.nl); Concertgebouwplein 2-6; 📞 telephone sales 10am-5pm, box office till 7pm

One of the world's great concert halls, the Concertgebouw has near-perfect acoustics that flatter the already wonderful Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Bernard Haitink, the celebrated conductor, once remarked that the hall was the best instrument the orchestra ever had.

Tickets are available by phone, through the VVV (p255) or AUB Ticketshop (p197). Visitors aged up to 27 can purchase last-minute tickets costing a mere €7.50 (when available) from 45 minutes before the curtain goes up.

Every Wednesday at 12.30pm from September till the end of June, the Concertgebouw holds free half-hour concerts, traditionally of chamber music or public rehearsals of an evening event. The conductors and musicians often have an international pedigree so, unsurprisingly, the events are exceedingly popular.

## CONSERVATORIUM VAN AMSTERDAM

Map p110

☎ 527 75 50; [www.cva.ahk.nl](http://www.cva.ahk.nl); Van Baerlestraat 27 Students at the Netherlands' largest conservatory of music offer regular classical recitals. Note that at the time of writing the venue was expected to move to the Oosterdokseiland (near Centraal Station) by late 2008.

## MEGA VENUES

You never know what to expect at the following venues. One night it might be an international pop star, then next it might be dance or a classical concert, or even a club night.

- **Amsterdam ArenA** (☎ 311 13 33; [www.amsterdamarena.nl](http://www.amsterdamarena.nl); Arena Blvd 1, Bijlmermeer) This ultimate stadium venue produces mega-shows like the Rolling Stones, Eminem and dance events.
- **Koninklijk Theater Carré** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 0900 252 52 55; [www.theatercarre.nl](http://www.theatercarre.nl); Amstel 115-125) The largest theatre in town puts on cabaret circuses, and big-budget musicals.
- **Melkweg** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 531 81 81; [www.melkweg.nl](http://www.melkweg.nl); Lijnbaansgracht 234a) The newly expanded 'Milky Way' draws the masses with its eclectic live music – everything from Afro-Celtic to thrash – plus dance halls, cinema, lounges and art galleries.
- **Paradiso** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 626 45 21; [www.paradiso.nl](http://www.paradiso.nl); Weteringschans 6) This former church remains the city's premier rock venue. Big-name acts like Bright Eyes, Jurassic 5 and Moby come often, and the Paradiso dance nights are legendary.
- **Stadsschouwburg** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 624 23 11; [www.stadsschouwburgamsterdam.nl](http://www.stadsschouwburgamsterdam.nl); Leidseplein 26) This stunning theatre from 1894 features large-scale productions, operettas, and drama by Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

## LEND AN EAR

The **Van Gogh Museum** (p109) has a weekly cultural series, held on Friday nights, that runs the gamut from classical music recitals to modern dance, lectures and singers. Some nights draw a thousand spectators, others are quiet and civilised.

## MUZIEKTHEATER Map pp62-5

☎ 625 54 55; [www.hetmuziektheater.nl](http://www.hetmuziektheater.nl); Waterlooplein 22

This swanky Stopera theatre is home to the Netherlands Opera, the National Ballet and the Netherlands Ballet Orchestra. International dance troupes such as those run by Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham also perform here.

## MUZIEKGEBOUW AAN 'T IJ Map p122

☎ tickets 788 20 00, office 788 20 10; [www.muziekgebouw.nl](http://www.muziekgebouw.nl); Piet Heinkade 1; performance prices vary; ♿ ticket office noon-7pm Mon-Sat This dazzling new performing-arts venue brings together several agendas under one roof. Behind the hi-tech exterior you'll find a dramatically lit main hall with flexible stage layout and great acoustics. Its jazz stage, **Bimhuis** (p197), is more intimate.

Free lunchtime concerts are normally held in the main hall once a month on different weekdays from September to May – check the website or printed programme for details.

## CINEMA

Amsterdam's hungry cinephiles have some 45 cinemas to choose from. The 'film ladder' listing of what's on is posted at pubs and cinemas, at [www.amsterdam.filmladder.nl](http://www.amsterdam.filmladder.nl) and in the Thursday newspapers. *AL* means *alle leeftijden* (all ages). Screenings are usually in the original language with Dutch subtitles.

Big multiplexes include the **Pathé cinemas** (☎ 0900 14 58, per min €0.35), with a central branch at **De Munt** (Map pp100-1; Vijzelstraat 15). The following cinemas are more interesting.

## CINECENTER Map pp100-1

☎ 623 66 15; Lijnbaansgracht 236

Euro and American art-house are the standard fare. The last Monday of the month is for queer films, except in summer. Don't miss the hip bar with white padded walls.

## DE UITKIJK Map pp100-1

☎ 623 74 60; [www.uitkiijk.nl](http://www.uitkiijk.nl); Prinsengracht 452 This fun art-house stalwart, located in an old canal house, is the city's oldest surviving cinema (dating to 1913). For film buffs who know their Fuller from their Fellini.

## FILMUSEUM Map p116

☎ 589 14 00; [www.filmuseum.nl](http://www.filmuseum.nl); Vondelpark 3 The esteemed Filmmuseum has two tiny cinemas screening cult horror, cutting-edge foreign films and specials devoted to screen legends and genres such as Bollywood. At the time of writing it was expected to move into a sleek new complex in Amsterdam-Noord in 2009.

## HET KETELHUIS Map pp58-9

☎ 684 00 90; [www.ketelhuis.nl](http://www.ketelhuis.nl); Westergasfabriek, Haarlemmerweg 8-10

In the old gas works, the three screening rooms have a chic post-industrial vibe and comfy seats; it's a great platform for art-house films. It also has a cosy café.

## KRITERION Map p122

☎ 623 17 08; [www.kriterion.nl](http://www.kriterion.nl); Roeterstraat 170 This UvA-student-run theatre-café has a great array of premieres, theme parties, classics, kids' flicks and more. This former diamond factory became a movie theatre after WWII to help resistance fighters earn an income.

## MOVIES Map p86

☎ 638 60 16; [www.themovies.nl](http://www.themovies.nl); Haarlemmerdijk 161

Indie features alongside mainstream at this beautiful Art Deco cinema. Treat yourself to a meal in the restaurant (the three-course 'dinner and a movie' costs a reasonable €29).

## RIALTO CINEMA Map p119

☎ 676 87 00; [www.rialtofilm.nl](http://www.rialtofilm.nl); Ceintuurbaan 338

This great old cinema near Sarphatipark focuses on premieres and gets eclectic art-house fare from around the world.

## TUSCHINSKITHEATER Map pp100-1

☎ 623 15 10, 0900 14 58, per min €0.35; [www.pathe.nl/tuschinski](http://www.pathe.nl/tuschinski); Reguliersbreestraat 26-34

Extensively refurbished, Amsterdam's most famous cinema is worth visiting for its sumptuous Art Deco/Amsterdam School interior. The main theatre shows blockbusters, the smaller one art-house and indie films.

## COMEDY

Given the Dutch are fine linguists and have a keen sense of humour, it's natural that English-language comedy would thrive in Amsterdam. The two premier comedy clubs in the Leidseplein area are the best places to see fast-thinking, fast-talking comics in action. No-one is safe from lampooning, even the audience.

## BOOM CHICAGO Map pp100-1

☎ 423 01 01; [www.boomchicago.nl](http://www.boomchicago.nl); Leidseplein Theater, Leidseplein 12

Amsterdam's leading show for English-language improv comedy, best enjoyed over dinner and a few drinks. The inhouse BoomBar has DJs spinning a few nights a week and a quiz night on Mondays.

## COMEDY CAFÉ AMSTERDAM

Map pp100-1

☎ 638 39 71; [www.comedycafe.nl](http://www.comedycafe.nl); Max Euweplein 43-45

The Comedy Café books Dutch and international stand-up comics. Sundays are normally reserved for English-speaking acts.

## SO YOU THINK THAT'S FUNNY?

In the early 1990s Andrew Moskos moved to Amsterdam and founded the Boom Chicago comedy club (above) with two other Americans. We asked him how he and Amsterdam got where they are today.

### How did you make the leap to Amsterdam?

My best friend and I were tourists here. We were in a coffeeshop and fell in love with Amsterdam, and got obsessed with the idea of quitting our jobs and coming here. There was a hole in the market for comedy. So we wrote to the city and laid out our idea.

### Has Boom's audience changed?

Our audience has got more sophisticated. We started off with topics like the Red Light District, soft drugs being legal, things we thought the tourists would go for. Now we've shifted into commenting on politics, American and Dutch. We had one show called Bite the Bullet, following the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, when big changes were underway in Holland.

### How has the club scene changed?

It's become less important, maybe 50% of what it was a few years ago. Amsterdam and its nightlife engine has changed too, not just here but in other cities too. The drinking, the cocaine, ecstasy, the dance culture, all this has moved into the background. If you go to a hip nightlife place now, you probably won't be dancing, whereas five years ago, you would. It's more head-bobbing now.

### Do you like how Amsterdam has cleaned up its act?

Like moving dirty postcards inside the shops, less graffiti etc? A lot of people were thinking, 'aw, how bland do we have to get?' But soon we realized, 'Wait a minute, that's actually better.' They made the garbage cans bigger too, which helped.

## DE KLEINE KOMEDIE Map pp100-1

☎ 624 05 34; [www.dekleinekomedie.nl](http://www.dekleinekomedie.nl); Amstel 56-58

This renowned little theatre founded in 1786 puts on concerts, dance, comedy and cabaret, sometimes in English.

## THEATRE, DANCE & SPOKEN WORD

The following is a shortlist of Amsterdam's lively theatre scene. Performances are mostly in Dutch but sometimes in English, especially in summer. See also Koninklijk Theater Carré and Stadsschouwburg (p199).

## AMSTERDAMS MARIONETTEN THEATER Map pp62-5

☎ 620 80 27; [www.marionettentheater.nl](http://www.marionettentheater.nl); Nieuwe Jonkerstraat 8; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-14yr

€15/free/7; ♿ performance times vary In a former blacksmith's shop near Nieuwmarkt, the marionette theatre has a limited repertoire (mainly Mozart operas such as *The Magic Flute*), but kids and adults alike are enthralled with the fairy-tale stage sets, period costumes and beautiful singing



## GAMBLING

Amsterdam's palette of vices includes the modern **Holland Casino** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 521 11 11; www.hollandcasino.nl; Max Euweplein 62; 🕒 1.30pm-3am), an easy walk from the Leidseplein. You can play blackjack, touch-bet roulette, 700 slot machines and our favourite game, 'Caribbean stud poker'. Government-issued photo ID (displaying date of birth) is required.

voices that bring the diminutive cast to life. From June to August the theatre only performs for groups; at other times, check the website for a schedule.

## AMSTERDAMSE BOS THEATRE

☎ 643 32 86; www.bostheater.nl; Amsterdamse Bos

This large open-air amphitheatre stages plays in Dutch (Shakespeare, Brecht, Chekhov) in summer. We love it when the actors pause as planes pass overhead.

## CASABLANCA VARIÉTÉ

☎ 625 56 85; www.casablanca-amsterdam.nl; Zeedijk 24; dinner & show €34.50, show only €5

The other half of Casablanca contains the Netherlands' only theatre devoted to the art of circus performance – sleight of hand, magic, variety shows and singers.

## COSMIC THEATER

Map pp62-5  
☎ 626 68 66; www.cosmictheater.nl; Nes 75-87  
Originally from Curaçao, this drama troupe stages plays representing a variety of cultures, with an emphasis on Surinamese, African, Turkish and Moroccan.

## DE BALIE

Map pp100-1  
☎ 553 51 51; www.debalie.nl; Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 10

The focus here is multicultural and political, in big international productions.

De Balie also holds short-film festivals and debates, has new-media facilities and a stylish bar.

## DE BRASSE GROND

Map pp62-5  
☎ 626 68 66; www.nesttheaters.nl; Flemish Cultural Centre, Nes 45

A fantastic array of music, experimental video, modern dance and exciting, young theatre is performed in Brakke Grond's striking 150-seat theatre.

## FELIX MERITIS

Map p92  
☎ 623 13 11; www.felix.meritis.nl; Keizersgracht 324

Amsterdam's former cultural centre puts on innovative, modern theatre, music and dance, with lots of co-productions by Eastern and Western European artists.

## FRASCATI

Map pp62-5  
☎ 626 68 66; www.nesttheaters.nl; Nes 63

This experimental theatre is a draw for young Dutch directors, choreographers and producers. Expect multicultural dance and music performances, as well as hip-hop, rap and breakdancing. In May it hosts a cool urban-dance festival that's worth checking out.

## OPENLUCHTTHEATER

Map p116  
Vondelpark Open-Air Theatre; ☎ 673 14 99; www.openluchttheater.nl; Vondelpark

From June to August the Vondelpark hosts free concerts in its intimate open-air theatre, and it's a fantastic experience to share with others. Expect world music, dance, children's theatre and more.

## THEATER BELLEVUE

Map pp100-1  
☎ 530 53 01; www.theaterbellevue.nl; Leidsekade 90

Come here for experimental theatre, international cabaret and modern dance, mainly in Dutch.

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**BLUELIST<sup>1</sup>** (blu,list) v.  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## GAY & LESBIAN AMSTERDAM

### top picks

- **Arc** (p206)  
Designer meet-market for being seen, air-kissed and ignored.
- **Black Tulip Hotel** (p207)  
Get tied up for a weekend in this spanking fine hotel.
- **De Engel van Amsterdam** (p205)  
Cruisey terrace bar for chin-chin wagging.
- **Getto** (p205)  
Island of taste in the Zeedijk's sea of testosterone.
- **Mr B** (p204)  
For all your jaw-dropping leather, fetish and dungeonwear.
- **Montmartre** (p206)  
Campy Bohemian bar where the '80s never die.
- **Queen's Head** (p205)  
Queer contrasts of frocks, jocks and Ken dolls.
- **Saarein** (p206)  
The original sisters' café, democratised for one and all.

# GAY & LESBIAN AMSTERDAM

The Netherlands was the first country to legalise same-sex marriage (in 2001), and homosexuality was decriminalised here as early as 1811. So it should come as no surprise that Amsterdam's gay scene is among the world's largest. Locals are always fretting about whether they've lost their cherry as 'European gay capital', but as debate takes place in the many gay and lesbian establishments (about 300 in total if you count the cool 'friendly' places) you may wonder what they're on about. The lesbian scene is much less active, but that's about par for the course.

For orientation, know that there are four hubs that party hardest. In the Red Light District, Warmoesstraat is home to the infamous leather and fetish bars, dungeonlike darkrooms, porn vendors and coffeeshops; Rembrandtplein (p104) is for traditional pubs, brown cafés and nightclubs, some with a sing-songy, campy bent; and the venerable scene around Leidseplein (p99) has a smattering of venues and hotels. The classiest act is located one street down from the flower market, in Reguliersdwarsstraat, and draws the beautiful twinkies who schmooze and cruise their way along the street. In summer it might seem like a giant block party.

Wherever you are, crowds tend to vary with the time of happy hour – it shifts from bar to bar, and so will you in all likelihood. Note that there have been a number of gay-bashing incidents in recent years, so use your street smarts outside of the pleasure zones. The vast majority of Amsterdam's eateries are gay-friendly, so see the Eating chapter (p156) when the munchies hit.

## SHOPPING

Amsterdam is many things to many people, but one thing it's not lacking in inhibition. This means that any shopping needs related to sexuality are catered to with gusto, and that you always leave a shop with more ideas, if less cash, than you entered with.

### INTERMALE Map pp62-5 Books

☎ 625 00 09; [www.intermale.nl](http://www.intermale.nl); Spuistraat 251  
One of Amsterdam's leading gay bookstores, Intermale has 1½ floors of photo books, sexy mags, videos and pornographic cards.

### VROLIJK Map pp62-5 Books

☎ 623 51 42; [www.vrolijk.nu](http://www.vrolijk.nu); Paleisstraat 135;  
☎ 11am-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri,  
10am-7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun, closed  
Sun Oct-Dec

The Netherlands' largest G&L bookstore carries the major mags as well as novels, guidebooks and postcards. Upstairs you'll find art, poetry and DVDs.

### SHIRT SHOP Map pp100-1 Clothing

☎ 423 20 88; [www.shirtshopamsterdam.nl](http://www.shirtshopamsterdam.nl);  
Reguliersdwarsstraat 64

On gay Amsterdam's main street, this funky, two-storey shop sells tight-fitting

men's shirts to make you look fabulous. Look for sale items around €25.

### MR B Map pp62-5 Erotica/Gay

☎ 422 00 03; [www.misterb.com](http://www.misterb.com); Warmoesstraat 89;  
☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-9pm Thu, 11am-6pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun

*Kinkee*. The tamer wares at this renowned Red Light District shop include leather and rubber suits, hoods and bondage equipment, all made to measure if you want.

### ROB Map pp62-5 Erotica/Gay

☎ 625 46 86; [www.rob.nl](http://www.rob.nl); Warmoesstraat 71  
RoB sells anything and everything for one's bondage and rough-sex fantasy: army gear, leather and rubber are just the start. Oh my!

## DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

More glasses are emptied and partners swung in the old City Centre and the Southern Canal Belt than anywhere else, although Jordaan's low-key scene has a few lesbian cafés. Warmoesstraat in the Red Light District is definitely for those who love it hard – leather and rubber, piercings and slings, darkrooms and acres of porn. A brighter crowd frequents the upper end of the Zeedijk, which has seen a revival of sorts.

## CITY CENTRE

### CAFÉ BARDEWIJN Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 420 51 32; Zeedijk 14

This very friendly beer bar draws a mixture of local gay regulars and tourists, and has killer views of the canal out back and Zeedijk in front, making it a must on Queen's Day.

### CUCKOO'S NEST Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 627 17 52; Nieuwezijds Kolk 6

A small, busy bar said to have the largest 'playroom' in Europe. You could spend a whole night exploring the labyrinth of cubicles and glory holes.

### DE ENGEL VAN AMSTERDAM

Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 427 63 81; [www.engelamsterdam.nl](http://www.engelamsterdam.nl); Zeedijk 21;  
☎ from 3pm Tue-Sun

The new 'Angel' draws a cruisey terrace crowd who toast the evening's promise with a flute of blended juice or champagne. DJ Mayday spins her favourites on Wednesday, and the TGIF drink night is starting to gel.

### GETTO Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 421 51 51; [www.getto.nl](http://www.getto.nl); Warmoesstraat 51;  
☎ Tue-Sun

This groovy, very long restaurant-bar is loved for its entertainment (tarot readers, DJs, bingo competitions). Great people-watching from the front, and a rear lounge where you can chill. Draws a cross-section of the gay community.

### PRIK Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 320 00 02; [www.prikamsterdam.nl](http://www.prikamsterdam.nl); Spuistraat 109;  
☎ 4pm-1am Sun & Tue-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat  
'Sexy snacks and liquids' is the motto of this peppy new retro bar with an 'I've just redone my loft' clientele of 20- to 30-somethings. Live DJs spin pop, house and dance discs.

### QUEEN'S HEAD Map pp62-5 Gay Bar

☎ 420 24 75; [www.queenshead.nl](http://www.queenshead.nl); Zeedijk 20;  
☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat

A beautifully decorated, canal-view, old-world-style café once run by legendary drag queen Dusty. The place has toned down a bit – there are still drag shows on Tuesday, but the crowd is more mixed, and even straights are welcome.

### COCKRING Map pp62-5 Gay Club

☎ 623 96 04; [www.clubcockring.com](http://www.clubcockring.com); Warmoesstraat 96;  
☎ 11pm-4am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat

This popular club has a disco downstairs playing techno and trance, while upstairs is a hot cruising area; leather boys are particularly welcome. Look for live strip shows and 'shoes only' parties.

### ARGOS Map pp62-5 Leather Bar

☎ 622 65 95; [www.argosbar.com](http://www.argosbar.com); Warmoesstraat 95;  
☎ 10pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat  
Amsterdam's oldest leather bar hosts leather boys of all ages in its famous darkrooms. The regular 'Sex on Sunday' party is always wild (though safe). Dress code: nude or seminude.

### WEB Map pp62-5 Leather Bar

☎ 623 67 58; St Jacobsstraat 6;  
☎ 2pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat  
Cruisey, well-established leather and clone bar with darkrooms and 'bear nights'. No, the pit below the grate in the floor is not a real loo.

## JORDAAN

### THERMOS DAY SAUNA Map p86 Gay Sauna

☎ 623 91 58; [www.thermos.nl](http://www.thermos.nl); Raamstraat 33;  
admission €18; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat, 11am-10pm Sun

Thermos is a sprawling, popular place for sexual contacts, with porn movies, private (or not so private) darkrooms, roof deck, hair salon and restaurant.

### CAFÉ SUGAR Map p86 Lesbian Café

☎ 623 12 34; Hazenstraat 19; ☎ 6pm-1am Thu-Mon

Not just for lesbians, the Sugar throws great parties and has a conscience for the goings-on of the *buurt* (neighbourhood). Come on in, blow up a balloon and hit the dance floor.

### DE TRUT Map pp58-9 Lesbian Club

☎ 612 35 24; Bilderdijkstraat 165e; ☎ 11pm-4am Sun

Just west of the Jordaan, this Sunday-night club is a lesbian institution held in the basement of a former squat. Its name means 'the tart' and it comes with an attitude; arrive well before 11pm, and know that heteros are definitely not welcome.



**SAAREIN** Map p86

Lesbian Café

☎ 623 49 01; Elandsstraat 119

This one-time feminist stronghold is still a meeting place for lesbians, although gay men are welcome too. The café dates from the 1600s, and vestiges remain. There's a small menu with tapas, soups and specials.

**SOUTHERN CANAL BELT****ARC** Map pp100-1

Bar/Restaurant

☎ 689 70 70; www.bararc.com; Reguliersdwarstraat 44; ☎ 4pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri &amp; Sat

The cool minimalist interior is sooo right for beautiful media types (mostly gay, but also lesbian and straight). Fancy martinis are the drink *du jour*, and the kitchen serves up zesty fusion cuisine.

**OTHER SIDE** Map pp100-1

Coffeeshop

☎ 421 10 14; www.theotherside.nl; Reguliersdwarstraat 6

This coffeeshop has grass from Jamaica, very strong Dutch super-skunk, hash from central Asia and more. Many tokers here are on a time-out from clubs like Arc.

**LELLEBEL** Map pp100-1

Drag Bar

☎ 427 51 39; www.lellebel.nl; Utrechtsestraat 4; ☎ 9pm-3am Mon-Thu, to 4am Fri &amp; Sat

This hole-in-the wall just off Rembrandtplein has karaoke, singing and comedy shows that bring out the best in any girl's wardrobe. It can get bitchy, but always in the funniest possible way.

**AMSTEL TAVERNE**

Map pp100-1

Gay Bar

☎ 623 42 54; Amstel 54

This historic brown café with Delft-blue tiles draws a 40s-and-up crowd that, in the right temperatures, spills onto the street to mix with passers-by. Definitely has that trademark 'only in Amsterdam' vibe.

**YIPPEE AYE 0-73!**

The hottest game in town is *Gay Super Bingo* (☎ 776 46 00; ☎ 8pm 1st Wed of month) at Strand West Beach (Map pp58-9). Theme: all-American rodeo. No guns allowed.

**MONTMARTRE** Map pp100-1

Gay Bar

☎ 620 76 22; Halvemaansteeeg 17; 5pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri &amp; Sat

Regarded by many as the Benelux's best gay bar, and a busy weekend will show why. Patrons sing along, or more like scream along, to recordings of Dutch ballads and old top-40 hits. It's like a campy Eurovision song contest.

**SOHO** Map pp100-1

Gay Bar

☎ 616 13 12; www.pubsoho.eu; Reguliersdwarstraat 36; ☎ 6pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri &amp; Sat

Pure kitsch – imagine an old-world English library on the *Titanic* – this huge, two-storey bar pumps with a young and ridiculously pretty clientele, drinking and flirting around the bar or on the upstairs Chesterfield sofas.

**APRIL** Map pp100-1

Gay Club

☎ 625 95 72; Reguliersdwarstraat 37

April is equally famous for its happy hour, a relaxed atmosphere (even when it's packed) and beautiful guys who cram into the space to flirt and drink. The revolving bar can make you giddy after too many cocktails.

**THERMOS NIGHT SAUNA**

Map pp100-1

Gay Sauna

☎ 623 49 36; www.thermos.nl; Kerkstraat 58-60; admission €18; ☎ 11pm-8am Sun-Fri, to 10am Sat

After the clubs close, Thermos Day's night-owl brother lets it all hang out. It's similar to the day sauna, except there's no restaurant, roof deck or hair salon.

**VIVELAVIE** Map pp100-1

Lesbian Café

☎ 624 01 14; www.vivelavie.net; Amstelstraat 7; ☎ 3pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri &amp; Sat

Just off Rembrandtplein, this lively place is probably Amsterdam's most popular lesbian café for its flirty girls, good-natured staff, loud music and large windows. In summer the outdoor terrace buzzes.

Also recommended:

*De Spijker* (Map pp100-1; ☎ 620 59 19; Kerkstraat 4a) Friendly leather bar with pool tables and busy darkroom.

*Entre Nous* (Map pp100-1; ☎ 623 17 00; Halvemaansteeeg 14) Club recovery zone; cosy despite the blood-red wallpaper.

**DAILY MARRIED IN AMSTERDAM**

Richard Keldoulis is co-founder of Pink Point, the gay and lesbian information kiosk (see p208). We asked the native Australian, married to his Dutch partner since 2004, about the paper chase of tying the knot.

**How much bureaucracy was involved?**

It was actually quite easy, because I got Dutch citizenship after living with my Dutch partner for five years. But now, to bring a partner in, gay or straight, it's a nightmare. You have to go back to your country of origin to apply, and your partner has to earn 120% of the minimum income. And it's virtually impossible now to bring in a partner from, say, Morocco or Turkey.

**What are the pros and cons of registration on one hand, and marriage on the other?**

Registration is for pets, as one friend put it. Marriage entails the broad spectrum – everything is settled legally, your pensions, benefits and so on. But it also puts your relationship on an equal level. Registration keeps you on a different level, a second-class thing.

**Can anyone just come and get married here?**

I get a lot of emails from people who want to come to Holland and tie the knot. But it's not that easy. One partner already has to be a resident, or have Dutch citizenship. Gay marriage is so normal here that it seems weird that you don't have it everywhere else.

*Exit* (Map pp100-1; ☎ 625 87 88; Reguliersdwarstraat 42) Carnivorous nightclub with a busy darkroom and 'Drag Planet' nights.

*Sappho* (Map pp100-1; ☎ 06 2868 4906; Vijzelstraat 103) Arty mixed-to-lesbian bar; women-only on Friday.

soft furnishings, in addition to TV, phone, safe and fridge. The breakfast room (with ruby-red walls and make-a-friend communal tables) becomes a gay internet café later.

**ORFEO HOTEL** Map pp100-1

Hostel

☎ 623 13 47; www.hotelorfeo.com; Leidsekkruisstraat 14; dm €35-45, s with bathroom €60, d with/without bathroom €80/125, tr €150; ☎

A cheap option for gay fellas, central Orfeo has simple, small, wood-panelled rooms (with TV, phone and minibar), sexy staff (they told us so themselves) and the flirtiest breakfast room in town.

**AERO HOTEL** Map pp100-1

Boutique Hotel

☎ 622 77 28; www.aerohotel.nl; Kerkstraat 45-49; d €90-110, without bathroom €75

Just steps away from Leidseplein, the popular Aero Hotel has been in the throes of renovation, but will surely be the cat's pink pyjamas by the time you read this. Rooms facing the back are quieter, and Camp Café's Sunday champagne brunch will remain a fixture.

**BLACK TULIP HOTEL**

Map pp62-5

Boutique Hotel

☎ 427 09 33; www.blacktulip.nl; Geldersekaade 16; incl buffet breakfast s €115, d €125-195; ☎

This small gay hotel (males only) has more bondage gear than you can shake a whip at. Everything is fashionable and (pardon the expression) spanking clean. Rates include ensuite bathroom, fridge and minibar.

**AMISTAD HOTEL** Map pp100-1

Boutique Hotel

☎ 624 80 74; www.amistad.nl; Kerkstraat 42; s €100-115, d €130-150, s/d without bathroom €75/94

Rooms at this bijou hotel are dotted with Philippe Starck chairs, CD players and chic,

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

There are boatloads of G&L resources in this town, so this is more about focussing on what you need.

## INFORMATION

**Amsterdam Police Gay Network** (☎ 559 53 85; homonetwork@amsterdam.politie.nl) The place to report any trouble or harassment.

**COC Amsterdam** (Map p86; ☎ 626 30 87; www.cocamsterdam.nl; Rozenstraat 14) The national gay and lesbian organisation, the oldest of its kind in the world.

**Gay & Lesbian Switchboard** (☎ 623 65 65; www.switchboard.nl; 📺 noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 4-10pm Sat & Sun) Great source. Provides advice on an anonymous basis.

**Pink Point** (Map p92; ☎ 412 44 63; www.pinkpoint.org; Westerkerk Sq; 📺 10am-6pm) Staffed by volunteers, this kiosk next to the Homomonument (p95) is a goldmine for details on Amsterdam's gay and lesbian scene, as well as souvenirs and gifts.

**Schorer Foundation** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 573 94 44; www.schorer.nl; Sarphatistraat 35; 📺 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) NGO offering healthcare services, HIV prevention and buddy care.

## WEBSITES

[www.cocamsterdam.nl](http://www.cocamsterdam.nl) Organises club nights and other events.

[www.gayamsterdam.nl](http://www.gayamsterdam.nl) Published by the *Gay News*, and comprehensive.

[www.gay.nl](http://www.gay.nl) Directory to pretty much anything in town, in Dutch only but decipherable.

[www.pinkpoint.org](http://www.pinkpoint.org) Links and information.

## GUIDES & MAPS

**Bent Guide (Pink Point)** Published in English, full of insider info on all facets of gay life.

**Gaymap Amsterdam, Gay News Amsterdam, Gay&Night** Listings mags available for free around town.

## RADIO & TV

The local gay radio station **MVS** (www.mvs.nl) broadcasts 7pm to 8pm nightly on 106.8 FM (cable 103.3 FM), with an English programme on Sunday. TV shows are broadcast 8pm to 9pm on Saturday via local station Salto A1.

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## lonely planet Hotels & Hostels

Want more Sleeping recommendations than we could ever pack into this little ol' book? Craving more detail – including extended reviews and photographs? Want to read reviews by other travellers and be able to post your own? Just make your way over to [lonelyplanet.com/hotels](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels) and check out our thorough list of independent reviews, then reserve your room simply and securely.

## SLEEPING

### top picks

- **Fusion Suites** (p220)  
A royal domain blessed with art and nature.
- **Between Art & Kitsch B&B** (p222)  
Comic relief with a bed attached.
- **Hotel Luxer** (p214)  
A slick slumber amid the neon lights.
- **Hotel Résidence Le Coin** (p212)  
Designer pods in a killer location.
- **Hotel Zandbergen** (p221)  
Peaceful and professional, but personal.
- **Maes B&B** (p216)  
Hidden oasis in the not-so-wild West.
- **Windketel** (p224)  
Your top romantic hideaway – and octagonal.
- **Hotel Brouwer** (p213)  
Few frills but great canal views.



# SLEEPING

In its typically charming way, Amsterdam has loads of hotels in wild and wonderful spaces: inspired architects breathed new life into old buildings, from converted schools and industrial lofts to entire rows of canal houses joined at the hip. Some of these lodgings overlook gorgeous canals or courtyards, some are filled with art that's historic or modern, and still others are triumphs of clever design.

But charm doesn't come cheap. There are 37,750-plus hotel rooms in Amsterdam, and at peak times it can seem that all of them are full. If you're looking to 'do' Amsterdam on the cheap, you might find yourself in a tiny, threadbare room and pay more for it than you thought possible. Leave the budget options to the college kids, take a deep breath, swipe that card and sally forth. Or look on the internet for substantial discounts, even at the top hotels.

If you're driving, inquire about parking in advance. In almost all cases parking is a major problem and the most you'll get is a (payable) parking permit out on the street – with all the attendant headaches and security risks – or a referral to the nearest parking garage (up to €40 a day), which may be a fair distance away. Top-end hotels have their own parking arrangements but prefer advance notice. See [Parking \(p241\)](#) for other important info.

Sleeping options specifically for gays and lesbians can be found on [p207](#).

## ACCOMMODATION STYLES

Amsterdam's lodgings run the gamut from baroque palaces and splendid boutique properties to little 'mum and dad' B&Bs, youth hostels and sprawling budget hotels. But the digs are modest-sized compared with those in other capitals – any hotel with more than 20 rooms is considered large, and many rooms are on the snug side. Quite a few hotels are polished gems strung alongside the old canals like Vermeer earrings. Some of the most tempting hotels link two or more such places; the Hotel Pulitzer ([p215](#)) is composed of 25 houses!

You'll see a 'star' plaque on the front of every hotel, indicating its rating according to the Benelux Hotel Classification. The stars (from one to five) have to do with the existence of certain facilities, rather than quality.

This means that a two-star hotel, for example, may be in better condition than a hotel of higher rank, though admittedly with fewer facilities. Accommodation that rates less than one star cannot call itself a hotel, but rather a *pension*, guesthouse or B&B. If a room has both ensuite toilet and shower (or bath) we've used the term 'with bathroom'; if the bathroom and toilet are in the corridor we've used 'without bathroom'. Unless otherwise stated, all rooms have ensuite bathroom.

If you have a special need (wheelchair access, elevator, bathtub as opposed to shower, triple or family-size room), be sure to inquire.

## Bed & Breakfasts

By law, an inn with four rooms or fewer cannot be called a hotel, but a handful of interesting B&Bs has sprung up in recent years. Most don't have exterior signage and access is by reservation only, giving the property an intimate feel. Many visitors enjoy the ability to feel more like a local in a home, an experience that's difficult to get in a larger lodging. Styles range from classic to kitsch to contemporary.

## Houseboats

We're not talking a hardship cruise here. Amsterdam's residents have perfected the art of comfy living above the fishes, and some of the 3000-odd houseboats are rented out at quite reasonable rates. Stick to vessels in the quieter Western Canal Belt and Jordaan, where you're less likely to be disturbed by the wake of those monster tour boats.

## Party & Stoner Hotels

This being Amsterdam, a number of hotels in the budget category cater to party guests (not that reception will ask if that's you) as well as pot smokers. By and large they're pretty basic affairs, but we've included a few for those who can't resist the temptation.

If in doubt whether smoking is permitted, be sure to ask when you make your reservation. At many hotels, smoking of any

kind is prohibited in rooms, and others have strict no-drugs policies. Don't be embarrassed about asking ahead of time – you'll hardly be the first.

## Youth Hostels

The Netherlands youth-hostel association goes by the name [Stayokay](#) ([☎](#) 551 31 55; [www.stayokay.com](#)) and is affiliated with Hostelling International (HI). There are several Stay Okay hostels in Amsterdam, and for those seeking private rooms, most have singles and doubles.

A youth-hostel card entitles you to receive €2.50 a night discount. Prices include breakfast and clean linen upon arrival. Be sure to book well ahead, especially in busy periods (spring, summer and autumn holidays).

There are also a number of non-Stay Okay/HI hostels in town.

## LONGER-TERM RENTALS

If you'll be in town for a while, it may make sense to rent a flat. Get yourself a bike and you'll practically be a local. Prices for furnished apartments start at about €700 per month but can easily be triple that. Houseboats are another option. Many agencies have a minimum rental period (eg six months). See the boxed text, [below](#), for some places to start looking.

## RESERVATIONS

Offices of the VVV ([p255](#)) and GWK ([p248](#)) have last-minute hotel-booking services, though expect queues during peak season. For bookings, the VVV charges a €4 commission for walk-ins and €15 by telephone,

### FLAT CHAT

The following websites are a good place to start if you're looking for an apartment in Amsterdam.

- [Amsterdam Apartment](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); [☎](#) 668 26 54; [www.amsterdamapartment.nl](#); Oude Nieuwstraat 1)
- [Apartment Services](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); [☎](#) 672 18 40; [www.apartmentservices.nl](#); Waalstraat 58)
- [Citymundo](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); [☎](#) 470 57 05; [www.citymundo.com](#); Schinkelkade 47)
- [Goudsmit Estate Agents](#) ([☎](#) 644 19 71; [www.goudsmit.com](#); AJ Ernststraat 735)
- [IDA Housing Services](#) ([☎](#) 624 83 01; [www.idahousing.com](#); Den Texstraat 30)

Some visitors (and this author) have achieved excellent results via local message boards. Among them:

- [www.craigslst.com](#) Worldwide resource for just about anything. Its Amsterdam presence is small but effective.
- [www.expatica.com](#) An excellent resource for the expat community. Go directly to the classified ads.
- [www.viavia.nl](#) For this one you'll need to read Dutch (click 'Woon & Bedrijfsruimte' to start, then click 'Tijdelijk' (temporary) under 'Woningen' (housing).

while the GWK office charges €10 – although with a little forethought, both services are free online.

If you're targeting a particular hotel, check its website or phone directly to inquire. Otherwise, try a travel agent or discount travel websites, where you may be able to get last-minute bookings even at the swankiest hotels; try [www.amsterdam-hotels-guide.com](#), [www.bookings.com](#), [www.hotelres.nl](#), [www.lastminute.com](#) or [http://amsterdam.ratestogo.com](#).

Some smaller hotels won't accept credit-card details over the phone (if they accept cards at all) and may insist on a deposit by cheque or money order before they'll confirm the booking.

When booking for two people, make it clear whether you want a twin (two single beds) or double (a bed for two). It usually makes no difference to the price, but the wrong bed configuration could be impossible to fix on the spot if the hotel is fully booked.

Always get a confirmation in writing.

## ROOM RATES

Once you get used to the idea of cramped rooms at high rates, in general you'll find you get what you pay for: the more you spend, the grander you get.

We list rates for single and double rooms, and sometimes other options where available. Some hotels offer family rates.

The rates in this book are the non-discounted 'rack' rates; treat them as a rough guide. Prices at many hotels drop in the low season (roughly October to April excluding Christmas/New Year and Easter). Even in high season it's worth asking for 'special' rates,

especially for longer stays. Top-end hotels often rely on business travellers and tend to lower rates in the summer months and on weekends. Many hotels also offer discounts via their websites, especially for last-minute bookings.

Most of the quoted rates include a 5% city-hotel tax; at the more expensive hotels, however, this is added separately to the bill. Also, if you're paying by credit card, some hotels add a surcharge of up to 5% (ouch).

## Deluxe

Facilities like air-conditioning, fitness centres (some with pocket-sized swimming pools), conference and banquet rooms, and business services are par for the course. Breakfast is rarely included (and can cost €20 and up).

## Top End

For a bit of luxury, loads of privacy and lashings of personal service, these hotels will put a smile on your dial. Expect lifts, in-room internet access, minibars and room service. Unless stated, rates include breakfast.

## Midrange

Most hotels in this category are big on comfort, low on formality and small enough to offer personal attention. Unless otherwise stated, rooms have toilet and shower (and/or bath) and come with TV, phone and breakfast. Not many hotels in this category over two storeys have lifts (elevators), and their quaint narrow stairwells can take some getting used to, especially with luggage.

## Budget

Lodgings in the lowest price bracket are thin on the ground in Amsterdam. Some are nothing short of run-down flophouses with mouldy smells, due to the damp climate and the Dutch aversion to decent ventilation. The better options tend to be spic 'n' span with furnishings that are, at best, cheap 'n' cheerful.

## PRICE GUIDE

This guide is based on the average price for a double room, tax not included. Breakfast may or may not be included – see the individual listings.

€€€€	over €270	Deluxe
€€€	€160-270	Top End
€€	€80-160	Midrange
€	under €80	Budget

## CITY CENTRE

The myriad contrasts of the old centre, only 1km long and 500m wide, are a powerful draw for guests who want to be in the thick of it 24 hours a day. Accommodation options cover all the bases, from the hostels and party hotels of the Red Light District to deluxe establishments with sweeping river views.

## MEDIEVAL CENTRE

### HOTEL DE L'EUROPE

Map pp62-5

Luxury Hotel €€€€

☎ 531 17 77; [www.leurope.nl](http://www.leurope.nl); Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2-8; s/d €325/400; 🍷 🍷

Oozing Victorian elegance, L'Europe welcomes you with a glam chandelier, a marble lobby, 100 gloriously large rooms (some have terraces and all have handsome marble bathrooms), and smart extras like a shoeshine service and boats for canal cruises. The attached Excelsior restaurant and chichi gym (said to be admired by no less than Governor Schwarzenegger) are equally impressive.

### HOTEL RÉSIDENCE LE COIN

Map pp62-5

Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 524 68 00; [www.lecoin.nl](http://www.lecoin.nl); Nieuwe Doelenstraat 5; s €110, d €133-147, q €220

This shiny inn owned by the University of Amsterdam offers 42 small high-class apartments spread over seven historical buildings, all equipped with designer furniture, wood floors, wireless internet and kitchenettes – and all reachable by lift. It's in the thick of things, opposite the popular grand [Café de Jaren](#) (p185) and just a five-minute stroll to pretty Nieuwmarkt. Staff are pleasant, and breakfast costs €9 per person.

### BELLEVUE HOTEL

Map pp62-5

International Hotel €€

☎ 530 95 30; [www.bellevuehotel.nl](http://www.bellevuehotel.nl); Martelaarsgracht 10; s/d/tr/q from €80/110/150/180; 🍷 🍷

Of the small hotels around Centraal Station, this is the only one we'd stay at. Opened spring 2005, rooms are small, white and tidy, and feature mod loos and themes of sand, water and grass. If you're sensitive to noise, get a room in the back. American-style breakfast costs €10.

### HOTEL HOKSBERGEN

Map pp62-5

Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 626 60 43; [www.hotelhoksbergen.nl](http://www.hotelhoksbergen.nl); Singel 301; s €84-98, d €90-125, apt €165-220

You sure can't beat Hoksbergen's fantastic canal-side location, and there's a breakfast buffet, but be warned: even sardines would have trouble squishing into the microscopically small rooms (with clean but plain furnishings). If you feel claustrophobic, a self-contained apartment (up to five people) may be a better option.

### HOTEL BROUWER

Map pp62-5

Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 624 63 58; [www.hotelbrouwer.nl](http://www.hotelbrouwer.nl); Singel 83; s/d €55/90; 🍷

Our favourite hotel in this price range, it has just eight rooms in a house dating back to 1652. Its rooms, named for Dutch painters, are furnished with simplicity, but all have canal views. There's a mix of Delft-blue tiles and early-20th-century furniture, and – get this – a tiny elevator. Staff dispense friendly advice. Reserve well in advance. No credit cards accepted.

### AMSTEL HOTEL

Map pp62-5

Party Hotel €€

☎ 626 42 47; [www.amstelhotel.com](http://www.amstelhotel.com); Oosterdokskaade 2-4; s & d with land/water view from €78/83, tr with land/water view from €119/124; 🍷

Five minutes' walk from Centraal Station, this floating hotel is usually populated by dazed, Europe-in-four-days bus groups and packs of Brit boys/girls celebrating bucks'/hens' nights. Rooms are sterile (in both senses) and have TV, phone and itty-bitty bathrooms. Breakfast is €10 per person. Note there are occasional two- and three-night stay requirements (eg on weekends).

### HOTEL BRIAN

Map pp62-5

Stoner Hotel €€

☎ 624 46 61; [www.hotelbrian.com](http://www.hotelbrian.com); Singel 69; s/d without bathroom €37/54; 🍷

This ardently shabby and relaxed joint ('joint' being the operative word) was ostensibly given a facelift a few years ago, but honestly, it's hard to tell. But it's churlish to quibble when the rates include a good breakfast buffet, advice from fun,

knowledgeable staff, and the odd chance of scoring a room with skylights and canal views. Kitchen facilities are available, but there are no phones or TVs in rooms.

### FLYING PIG DOWNTOWN HOSTEL

Map pp62-5

Stoner Hotel €€

☎ 420 68 22; [www.flyingpig.nl](http://www.flyingpig.nl); Nieuwendijk 100; dm €22-30; 🍷

Hang out with hundreds of young, dope-smoking backpackers at this very relaxed, very central, 30-room hostel; rates vary by time of year and number of beds per room (the smallest has four). It's pretty grungy, but no-one seems to mind, especially when there's so much fun to be had in the throbbing lobby bar with a pool table, DJs some nights and a chilled-out, cushion-lined basement nicknamed the 'happy room'.

### AIVENGO YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp62-5

Hostel €€

☎ 620 11 55, 421 36 70; [www.aivengoyouthhostel.com](http://www.aivengoyouthhostel.com); Spuistraat 6; dm weekday/weekend €18/20; 🍷

Funky Aivengo's, with two rooms (18 and 19 beds respectively), is a real winner. It's got a quiet, respectful vibe and wonderful, cheery, modern-Middle Eastern interior. Rates here include clean bed linen and towels as well as a safety deposit box, but there's no breakfast or common rooms. Note: there's a 1pm to 5pm lockout and a 4am curfew.

## RED LIGHT DISTRICT

### NH GRAND HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY

Map pp62-5

International Hotel €€€

☎ 554 91 11; [www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com); Dam 9; d €270; 🍷

Pride of place belongs to this gargantuan, 468-room edifice across from the Royal Palace, one of the city's first grand hotels (1866). NG Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky has elegant if compact rooms and spectacular public spaces. The 19th-century 'winter garden' dining room, with its soaring steel-and-glass roof, is a national monument (the splendid breakfast buffet costs an extra €22), and there are fitness and business centres. Note: rates can vary widely.

**HOTEL LUXER** Map pp62-5 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 330 32 05; <http://hotelluxer.tobook.com>;  
Warmoesstraat 11; s/d/tr €85/110/150; ☒ ☑ ☒  
A pleasant surprise if ever there was one, this smart little number is the probably the best option for your money in the thick of the RLD, with vast numbers of pubs and more within staggering distance. Rooms are small but well equipped (air-conditioning!) and at night the breakfast area becomes a chic little bar. The only real drawback is the bathrooms, which are well thought out but miniscule.

**HOTEL WINSTON** Map pp62-5 Party Hotel €€

☎ 623 13 80; [www.winston.nl](http://www.winston.nl); Warmoesstraat 123; s €67-77, d €90-110  
Party central for touring bands and up-for-anything tourists, with rock'n'roll rooms and a busy club downstairs. Most rooms are 'art' rooms: local artists were given free rein, with results from super-edgy (entirely stainless steel) and playful to questionably raunchy. Group rooms sleep up to eight. Look for midweek and off-season discounts. Staff can be less than warm, but hey, it's rock'n'roll, man. Deal with it.

**HOTEL THE CROWN**Map pp62-5 Party Hotel €€

☎ 626 96 64; [www.hotelthecrown.com](http://www.hotelthecrown.com);  
Oudezijds Voorburgwal 21; s €40-70, d €80-120, tr €120-160; ☒  
Rooms at this Brit-run, Red Light District hotel are pretty monastic (shared toilet, no TV or phone), and don't even bother asking for breakfast. Although it is priced in our midrange bracket, quality is firmly budget. So what's the draw? Fun. The 1930s Art Deco bar has sports on TV, a pool table, a dartboard and hordes of celebrating stag-nighters. Spliff-smoking is permitted (some would say encouraged) in the bar, but no smoking in rooms.

**OLD NICKEL** Map pp62-5 Party Hotel €

☎ 624 19 12; [www.oldnickel-amsterdam.nl](http://www.oldnickel-amsterdam.nl);  
Nieuwe Brugsteeg 11; s/d/tr/q without bathroom €50/80/120/160

Location, location: the Nickel will appeal to everyone looking for a simple place to crash after a red-light romp. Go up (and up and up) the steep stairs from the historic, well-stocked pub, and you'll find clean no-nonsense rooms, all bathrooms shared. Rates include a big cooked breakfast and drop sharply during the week.

**NIEUWMARKT****MISC EAT DRINK SLEEP**Map pp62-5 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 330 62 41; [www.hotelmisc.com](http://www.hotelmisc.com); Kloveniersburgwal 20; r €135-215; ☒  
Steps from Nieuwmarkt Square, the Misc's six rooms make up in visuals what they lack in size. Feeling romantic? Book the lovely 'baroque' room. The 'Africa' room is an escape, while the 'room of wonders' is a modern Moroccan escapade. It's so relaxed that a freshly cooked breakfast (included in rate) is served until noon, and staff will arrange for massage services. Canal View rooms cost more, but the Garden View rooms are equally charming.

**STADSDOELEN YOUTH HOSTEL**Map pp62-5 Hostel €

☎ 624 68 32; [www.stayokay.com](http://www.stayokay.com); Kloveniersburgwal 97; dm €20-28, s €25-36, d €36/72; ☒ ☒  
Efficient Stadsdoelen is always bustling with backpackers and we can understand why. The staff is friendly and the mix of 11 ultraclean, single-sex and mixed rooms (each with up to 17 beds and free lockers) offer a modicum of privacy. There's a big TV room, a great smoke-free bar, a pool table and laundry facilities.

**CHRISTIAN YOUTH HOSTEL****'THE SHELTER CITY'** Map pp62-5 Hostel €

☎ 625 32 30; [www.shelter.nl](http://www.shelter.nl); Barndesteeg 21; dm ind breakfast €16, Jul & Aug €19; ☒ ☒  
The price is right at this rambling hostel just outside the Red Light District, but *only* if you can handle Christian rock music piped through the PA system and enormous 'Jesus loves you' signs. The pros of staying here include large, airy, single-sex dorms (and bathrooms, which are frequently cleaned), filling breakfasts, a quiet garden courtyard, eternal salvation and a tough no-drugs or alcohol policy. The cons include a 2am curfew – and a tough no-drugs or alcohol policy. Its partner hostel in the *Jordaan* (opposite) has less missionary zeal.

**JORDAAN**

This colourful district has but a few sleeping options in its tangle of narrow lanes, due in part to the paucity of sights close by. But the cosy cafés, quirky shops and charming village character make the *Jordaan* a great place to get forty winks.

**HOTEL AMSTERDAM WIECHMANN**Map p86 Inn €€

☎ 626 33 21; [www.hotelwiechmann.nl](http://www.hotelwiechmann.nl); Prinsengracht 328; s/d/tr from €85/140/195; ☒  
This family-run hotel occupies three houses. It has a marvellous canal-side location, cosy but lovingly cared-for rooms furnished like an antique shop with country quilts and chintz, and lobby *tchotchkes* (knick-knacks) that have been there for some 50 years (including a suit of armour and a potbellied stove). It's very *Ghost & Mrs Muir* and very friendly.

**HOTEL ACACIA** Map p86 Inn €€

☎ 622 1460; [www.acacia.nl](http://www.acacia.nl); Lindengracht 251; s/d/tr/q €70/85/100/120, on a boat d €115-125, q €130  
If you simply want to park your bones after a day on the canals, the Acacia is just the ticket, fully devoid of extras in a sleepy corner of the Jordaan. Rooms in the angular corner building are larger than the norm, if oddly shaped, and all have a bath and WC attached. And if you've seen steep stairs before, think climbing gear this time. Management is friendly and has a few houseboats to rent too.

**HOTEL VAN ONNA** Map p86 Inn €€

☎ 626 58 01; [www.hotelvanonna.nl](http://www.hotelvanonna.nl); Bloemgracht 102-108; r per person €45; ☒  
Even if the 41 rooms here won't win any design awards, they're reasonably priced and you're in a gorgeous section of the Jordaan, within earshot of the bells of the Westerkerk (get a room in the back if you're sensitive to noise). Rooms sleep up to four people. Try to book the attic room with its old wooden roof beams and panoramic views over the Jordaan. No phone, TV or credit cards.

**INTERNATIONAL BUDGET HOSTEL**Map p86 Stoner Hostel €€

☎ 624 27 84; [www.internationalbudgethostel.com](http://www.internationalbudgethostel.com); Leidsegracht 76; dm €28-30, tw €70; ☒ ☒  
Reasons to stay: canal-side location in a former warehouse; really close to night-life; four-person limit in rooms; cool mix of backpackers from around the world smoking in the lounge (though smoking is strictly prohibited in rooms, as are hard drugs); clean rooms with lockers; staff who're more pleasant than they need to be; lower off-season rates. Reasons not: your money will go further elsewhere as breakfast isn't included.

**CHRISTIAN YOUTH HOSTEL****'THE SHELTER JORDAN'** Map p86 Hostel €

☎ 624 47 17; [www.shelter.nl](http://www.shelter.nl); Bloemstraat 179; dm €16-22, q €80-94 ☒ ☒  
OK, we'll put up with the 'no-everything' (smokin', drinkin', spliffin') policy and the curfew at this small hostel because it's such a gem, on a quiet block yet steps from the tram line. Single-sex dorms are quiet and clean, breakfasts – especially the fluffy pancakes – are beaut and the garden patio is a relaxing retreat. The café serves cheap, cheap, cheap meals the rest of the day.

**WESTERN CANAL BELT**

For sleeping in centuries-old style, the wide, tree-lined canals and stylish mansions of the Western Canal Belt take some beating. Incredibly, as many structures are protected monuments, there may be little difference between the façade of a luxury hotel and that of a hostel. The café-filled Jordaan district is nearby, and shoppers will appreciate the Negen Straatjes boutiques on their doorstep.

**DYLAN** Map p92 Deluxe Hotel €€€€

☎ 530 20 10; [www.dylanamsterdam.com](http://www.dylanamsterdam.com); Keizersgracht 384; s/d from €295/445  
London hotelier Anouska Hempel was behind the design of this hotel, known until recently as Blakes. Although Hempel has parted company and the name has changed, the Dylan remains a true temple of style. Slink through the 17th-century canal house's courtyard entrance and past the gorgeous staff to ensconce yourself in the restaurant or the black-and-white lobby where world beats don't so much play as fizz. Its 41 sophisticated, individually decorated rooms might have Japanese or Indonesian motifs; fluffy towels, silk pillows piled high and spacious bathrooms make them serene and sumptuous. Plus, there's free health-club access, and a lounge *par excellence*.

**HOTEL PULTIZER** Map p92 Luxury Hotel €€€

☎ 523 52 35; [www.luxurycollection.com/pulitzer](http://www.luxurycollection.com/pulitzer);  
Prinsengracht 315-331; d from €255; ☒ ☑ ☒  
Spread over 25 lovely canal houses, the Pulitzer manages to combine big-hotel efficiency with boutique-hotel charm. Beautifully restored rooms vary from house to house, but all have mod cons galore, including sweet and cosy bathrooms. There are loads of extras too: choose from a cigar



bar, an art gallery, private 75-minute canal cruises, garden courtyards and a wonderful restaurant, all high on elegance and low on pomposity.

### CANAL HOUSE HOTEL

Map p92 Boutique Hotel €€€  
 ☎ 622 51 82; [www.canalhouse.nl](http://www.canalhouse.nl); Keizersgracht 148; r €140-190

Where to spend your time in this splendid 26-room hotel dating from MDCCLXXX (as it says on the façade)? In the ornately furnished, high-ceilinged, 17th-century dining room resplendent with chandeliers, grand piano and garden views? The plush, burgundy-hued bar? Or the small but inviting, antique-filled guest rooms? Staff are agreeable, and rooms have phones and computer connections.

### HAMPSHIRE CLASSIC HOTEL TOREN

Map p92 Boutique Hotel €€  
 ☎ 622 60 33; [www.toren.nl](http://www.toren.nl); Keizersgracht 164; s/d from €125/155; ☒ ☑ ☒

A title-holder for price, room size and personal service. The Toren's communal areas are pure 17th century with gilded mirrors, fireplaces and magnificent chandeliers, while its guest rooms are elegantly furnished with modern facilities. Treat yourself and book the room with the two-person Jacuzzi and the garden patio (from €270). Breakfast costs €12.

### MIAUW SUITES

Map p92 Boutique Hotel €€  
 ☎ 717 34 29; [www.miauw.com](http://www.miauw.com); Hartenstraat 36; r/ste €145/245 ☒ ☒

Located above the designer fashion shop of the same name, Miauw's spacious quarters are just what the doctor ordered for a weekend's shopping blitz in the Negen Straatjes district. The snug rooms mix stylish and vintage interior décor, and have electronic goodies such as widescreen TVs and wi-fi. Minimum stay is two nights. The suites are more like one-bedroom flats with a full living room and an open kitchen.

### FREDERIC'S RENTABIKE & HOUSEBOATS

Map p92 Houseboats €€  
 ☎ 624 5509; [www.frederic.nl](http://www.frederic.nl); Brouwersgracht 78; d €105-135, tr/q €140/150

Some visitors harbour a Mark Twain fantasy of drifting on the waves all night (sans the nasty steering) and then find their rust-bucket is cold and clammy. Not so with

Frederic, whose nicely outfitted houseboats on the Prinsengracht, Brouwersgracht and Bloemgracht are bona fide floating holiday homes with all the mod cons.

### MAES B&B

Map p92 B&B €€  
 ☎ 427 51 65; [www.bedandbreakfastamsterdam.com](http://www.bedandbreakfastamsterdam.com); Herenstraat 26hs; s €70-90, d €95-130; ☒ ☒

If you were designing a traditional home in the western canals, it would probably turn out a lot like this four-bedroom property: oriental carpets, wood floors and exposed brick. It's actually fairly spacious for such an old building. The kitchen (open all day for guests to use) is definitely *gezellig*. Rooms have TVs but no phones.

### HOTEL NEW AMSTERDAM

Map p92 Boutique Hotel €€  
 ☎ 522 23 45; [www.hotelnwamsterdam.nl](http://www.hotelnwamsterdam.nl); Herengracht 13-19; s €85, d €120-130, tr €140; ☒ ☒

This building, which was once a brothel, a sailors' hostel and the basic Hotel New York, received a makeover in 2004 and has become a quick favourite among the cultural crowd, as well as establishing quite a considerable gay following. Perhaps it's because of the fresh-painted murals in guest rooms and common rooms (some peppered with naughty bits), fresh-pressed OJ for breakfast, and fresh-faced, friendly staff. Phone calls and drinks won't break the bank.

### HOTEL NADIA

Map p92 Inn €€  
 ☎ 620 15 50; [www.nadia.nl](http://www.nadia.nl); Raadhuisstraat 51; s/d/tr/q €90/120/170/220; ☒ ☑ ☒

Originally built for an insurance firm, this handsome building has a precipitous set of stairs (go figure) but the nice folks at Nadia will tote your luggage up them and do just about everything else to make you feel at home. Rooms are immaculate, with linens that will bounce coins. Rooms to the front have great views of the Westerkerk, and apart from the trams (ear plugs) there is little to fault.

### BUDGET HOTEL CLEMENS

AMSTERDAM Map p92 Inn €€  
 ☎ 624 60 89; [www.clemenshotel.nl](http://www.clemenshotel.nl); Raadhuisstraat 39; s without bathroom €60, d without bathroom €75-80, d/tr with bathroom €120/150; ☒

Tidy, renovated, steep-staired Clemens gears itself to all budgets. Take your pick of the chic themed rooms (one with a sexy

red-gold interior, another with delicate French antiques) all with TV, phone, safe and fridge. Your gregarious hostess will lend PCs for in-house wireless internetting (€8 per night). Breakfast is €7 extra.

### HOTEL PAX

Map p92 Inn €€  
 ☎ 624 97 35; Raadhuisstraat 37; s without bathroom €25-40, d without bathroom €35-60, d with bathroom from €60

This budget choice in hotel-lined Raadhuisstraat – an eight-room hotel run by two friendly, funky brothers – has an artsy-student vibe. All eight rooms have a TV and each is individually decorated. The larger rooms face a street with noisy trams, but the view of the Westerkerk and Keizersgracht more than makes up for it. Breakfast is not included.

## SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

This is a cradle of Golden Age riches, so no surprise that many of Amsterdam's swankiest hotels are located here, not far from the dining hub of Utrechtsstraat and the antique shops of Nieuwe Spiegelstraat. Yet the elegant Southern Canal Belt has accommodation for all sizes of wallet.

### SEVEN ONE SEVEN

Map pp100-1 Deluxe Hotel €€€€  
 ☎ 427 07 17; [www.717hotel.nl](http://www.717hotel.nl); Prinsengracht 717; r €415-670; ☒ ☒

One of the most wonderful hotels in Amsterdam – designed, boutique and simply breathtaking. Its eight hyper-plush, deliciously appointed rooms come with that rare luxury: space. Step into the splashy Picasso suite – with its soaring ceiling, prodigiously long sofa, gorgeous contemporary and antique decorations, and bathroom as big as some European principalities – and you may never, ever want to leave. Rates include breakfast, afternoon tea, house wine and oodles of one-on-one service.

### AMSTEL INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

Map pp100-1 International Hotel €€€€  
 ☎ 622 60 60; [www.amsterdam.intercontinental.com](http://www.amsterdam.intercontinental.com); Professor Tulpplein 1; r from €410; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

Everything about this five-star edifice is spectacular, from its imposing location overlooking the Amstel, to its magnificent colonnaded lobby and, of course, its wallet-walloping room prices. Lavishly decorated

rooms, reverential service and luxe extras such as [La Rive restaurant](#) (two Michelin stars, p166), chauffeured limousines, heated indoor pool and fitness centre with all sorts of steam options delight even the fussiest trans-Atlantic celebrities and Euro-royalty.

### AMSTERDAM AMERICAN HOTEL

Map pp100-1 International Hotel €€€  
 ☎ 556 30 00; [www.amsterdamamerican.com](http://www.amsterdamamerican.com); Leidsekaade 97; r €140-240; ☒ ☒ ☒

You can't get much closer to the action than this, right off Leidseplein and a quick walk to the Museum Quarter. Its grand Art Deco shell is filled with a mixture of Deco and '90s contemporary furnishings. Since new owners took over several years ago, the ornate façade and tower have been restored to their original splendour, and all 175 rooms are now smoke-free. Guests have use of a gym with a sauna. Thankfully you don't need to be staying at the hotel to dine in the stunning [Café Americain](#) (p190).

### SEVEN BRIDGES

Map pp100-1 Boutique Hotel €€  
 ☎ 623 13 29; Reguliersgracht 31; s €90-220, d €110-260

Private, sophisticated and intimate, the Seven Bridges is one of the city's loveliest little hotels on one of its loveliest canals. It has eight tastefully decorated rooms (all incorporating lush oriental rugs and elegant antiques). The urge to sightsee may fade once breakfast, served on fine china, is delivered to your room.

### BANKS MANSION

Map pp100-1 International Hotel €€€  
 ☎ 420 00 55; [www.banksmansion.nl](http://www.banksmansion.nl); Herengracht 519-525; s €159-189, d €189-219; ☒ ☒

One of our favourite new hotels in town. There's no nickel-and-diming over incidentals like the lobby bar, breakfast, coffee, internet and snacks. Thoroughly renovated a few years ago, the rooms now feature contemporary décor, a plasma-screen TV, a DVD player, a wet bar (free gin, whisky etc), a terry-cloth robe and an enormous showerhead.

### HOTEL AMSTELZICHT

Map pp100-1 Inn €€  
 ☎ 623 66 93; [www.hotelamstelzicht.nl](http://www.hotelamstelzicht.nl); Amstel 104; s/d €95/159, apt €195-245 ☒ ☒

The view out front is straight from a 17th-century painting, so make sure you get one of the rooms facing the Amstel river and the gabled houses beyond. The '70s décor

here has a suitably bourgeois feel, and you'll enjoy the room amenities (minibar, hairdryer, coffee and tea kettle etc). It's bang in the action, just a minute's walk from Rembrandtplein. The self-catering apartment has an open kitchen, a living area and a balcony.

### HOTEL AGORA Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 627 22 00; [www.hotelagora.nl](http://www.hotelagora.nl); Singel 462; s & d €108-126, tr from €165, q €193; 📍

Fifteen minutes by foot from everything, the well-run Agora offers smallish rooms with understated décor, up-to-date bathrooms, and a cheerful garden off the breakfast room. All rooms have a phone, a TV and computer hookups. Rooms without private bathroom cost about one-third less.

### EUPHEMIA HOTEL

Map pp100-1 Stoner Hotel €€

☎ 622 90 45; [www.euphemiahotel.com](http://www.euphemiahotel.com); Fokke Simonszstraat 1; d €70-120, tr €75-132; 📍 📺 📺 📺 Euphemia's institutional layout falls short of glamorous, but the rooms are neat and many are quite large. Other pluses? It's gay-friendly, on a quiet block (with even less traffic during Metro construction on nearby Vijzelstraat) and there's a sharp, funny manager (though maybe too sharp for some). Smoking is prohibited in the rooms, but even spliffing is OK in common areas. Check the website for specials.

### HOTEL FREELAND Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 622 75 11; [www.hotelfreeland.com](http://www.hotelfreeland.com); Marnixstraat 386; s/d/tr €65/110/130; 📍 Freeland has the Leidesplein scene twigged, because what it supplies – basic but clean and tidy rooms at an excellent location, all with ensuite shower, some with balconies overlooking a canal, an ashlick from the next coffeeshop and unusually quiet – pretty much kills the competition. The congenial owners, Rick and Pascale, will make sure you get a big tasty breakfast.

### HOTEL DE ADMIRAAL Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 626 21 50; [www.admiraalamsterdam.nl](http://www.admiraalamsterdam.nl); Herengracht 563; s €65-85, d with/without bathroom €105/75

Near bustling Rembrandtplein, the Admiraal is sweet, homey and blessed with an interesting history. Nine clean and bright canal-side rooms (all with safes and TV, no phone)

are outfitted with seriously mismatched furniture. There's also a large 'family room'. The hotel attic was a hideout for Jews during WWII, while Nazi soldiers lodged and dined below. Breakfast is not available.

### HOTEL ADOLESCENCE Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 626 39 59; [www.adolesce.nl](http://www.adolesce.nl); Nieuwe Keizersgracht 26; s/d/tr €65/100/120; 📍

In a lovely nook near Waterlooplein, this little economy hotel based in an old canal house will put a smile on your face. There are bright art prints in the clean, simple rooms. There's no breakfast, but you can help yourself all day to coffee, tea and snacks, including fruit.

### HOTEL ORLANDO

Map pp100-1 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 638 69 15; [www.hotelorlando.nl](http://www.hotelorlando.nl); Prinsengracht 1099; s/d/tr from €85/100/115; 📍 📺 📺 📺

Oh Orlando, how do we love thee? Let us count the ways. One: five biggish, high-ceilinged, canalside rooms at smallish rates. Two: hospitable, gay-friendly hosts. Three: breakfast in bed. Four: impeccably chic, boutique style with custom-made cabinetry and satin curtains. We could go on, but we'll leave you to discover more.

### HOTEL KAP Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 624 59 08; [www.kaphotel.nl](http://www.kaphotel.nl); Den Texstraat 5b; s/d/tw €60/98/132; 📍

Wilhelmina Kap ran a *pension* here before the war, and some of the features seem that historic: midcentury wood panelling, no phones or nonsmoking rooms. Still, some bright rooms have French windows, wicker furniture and up-to-date bathrooms. A buffet breakfast is served in an attractive dining room and the courtyard garden, and courteous, gay-friendly owners round out the experience. Most rooms have private showers but shared toilets.

### CITY HOTEL Map pp100-1 Inn €€

☎ 627 23 23; [www.city-hotel.nl](http://www.city-hotel.nl); Utrechtsestraat 2; d with/without bathroom €90/80; 📍

Above the Old Bell pub, practically on Rembrandtplein, is this unexpectedly fabulous choice: it's clean, neat, good value and well run by a proud, warm family. The rooms are decorated with crisp linens and each comes with a TV. Rooms sleep two to eight people (from €25 per person). The attic annex has a wonderful view of town.

**QUENTIN HOTEL** Map pp100-1 Party Hotel €€  
☎ 626 21 87; [www.quentinhotels.com](http://www.quentinhotels.com); Leidsekade 89; s without bathroom €45, d with/without bathroom €89/72

The Quentin, decorated with colourful murals, rock-star art and contemporary handmade furniture, offers a variety of rooms for the weary traveller from cramped to well sized, some with balconies, canal views, phone and TV. It's popular with the gay community and international actors and musicians performing at nearby Theatre Bellevue, Melkweg and Paradiso. There's an elevator, and breakfast costs €7.

### HOTEL PRINSENHOF Map pp100-1 Inn €

☎ 623 17 72; [www.hotelprinsenhof.com](http://www.hotelprinsenhof.com); Prinsengracht 810; s/d without bathroom €49/69, s/d with bathroom €84/89

Honest value, this 18th-century house features ahh-lovely canal views, a breakfast room with some Delft-blue tiles, and 'Captain Hook', the electric luggage hoist in the central stairwell (gets around the no-lift issue). Staff are affable and the rooms spacious with antique and, well, not-antique furnishings. The attic quarters with diagonal beams are most popular.

### HEMP HOTEL Map pp100-1 Stoner Hotel €

☎ 625 44 25; [www.hemp-hotel.com](http://www.hemp-hotel.com); Frederiksplein 15; s without bathroom €60, d with/without bathroom €75/70; 📍

Proof positive that Amsterdam is the capital of the northern 'hempisphere', this chilled-out hotel serves hemp-flour rolls (tetrahydrocannabinol or THC-free) with your breakfast, the café sells hemp teas and beers, and all five colourful and individually decorated rooms (hemp soap and fabrics included) exude a 'just back from Goa' vibe. Dope-smokers reserve now (though you can't buy pot here – you gotta draw the line somewhere).

### HANS BRINKER BUDGET HOTEL

Map pp100-1 Party Hostel €

☎ 622 06 87; [www.hans-brinker.com](http://www.hans-brinker.com); Kerkstraat 136; dm €21, tw/tr/q per person €35/30/24; 📍

When a hotel promotes itself with the slogan 'Improve your immune system' next to a close-up of bacteria, you're bound to be pleasantly surprised. The lobby is mayhem, spartan rooms have all the ambience of a public hospital, and its 538 beds are almost always filled to capacity with school groups and boisterous backpackers. But the

bar is bright and happy, the disco pulsates, the restaurant serves cheap meals, rooms have shower and toilet, and rates include breakfast and bed linen. Drug-use equals automatic expulsion.

## OLD SOUTH

This quarter of wide, 19th-century boulevards and grand museums shouldn't be overlooked by hotel-seekers. Rooms here are a stone's throw from the renowned Concertgebouw and collections of Van Gogh and Rembrandt, and the delights of the city centre beckon just a few steps further.

### HILTON AMSTERDAM

Map p110 International Hotel €€€

☎ 710 60 00; [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com); Apollolaan 138-140; r from €240; 📍 📺

Although it's an old-school hotel with lots of business guests, the Hilton grabs the spotlight every once in a while. It was 'flower power' central in 1969 when John Lennon and Yoko Ono staged their 'bed-in' for world peace (you can rent the room). Herman Brood, the famously wrecked artist-musician, used to frequent the hotel bar carrying a parrot on his head before he jumped off the hotel roof (parrot survived). This tower fronts a grassy park with a marina out back; rooms are international business standard; the health club features a sauna and a Turkish bath; and service is crisp and professional.

### COLLEGE HOTEL Map p110 Boutique Hotel €€€

☎ 571 15 11; [www.thesteingroup.com/college](http://www.thesteingroup.com/college); Roelof Hartstraat 1; r from €175; 📺 📍

A breath of fresh air, this venerable property was originally a 19th-century school. It's now a trendy hotel with stylish accents: flat-screen TVs, silk-throw pillows, cordless phones, the occasional stained-glass window and exposed beams on the top floor. Here's the difference, though: it's staffed by hotel-school students. Continental breakfast costs a steep €17.50, but if the dining hall was this cool where we went to college, we'd have figured out a way not to graduate.

### HOTEL FITA Map p110 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 679 09 76; [www.hotelfita.com](http://www.hotelfita.com); Jan Luijkenstraat 37; s €100, d €130-160; 📍 📺

This tiny, family-owned hotel on a quiet street off Museumplein and PC Hooftstraat

was renovated a few years ago and is now one of the best in the Old South. It's got 16 handsome rooms with nicely appointed bathrooms, an English-style breakfast buffet and an elevator. Plus, room rates include free telephone calls to Europe and the USA.

### XAVIERA HOLLANDER BED & BREAKFAST

Map p110 **B&B €€**  
 ☎ 673 39 34; [www.xavierahollander.com](http://www.xavierahollander.com); Stadionweg 17; d from €120; 📍

A living legend of flickering celluloid, and glad to provide all the details, the *Happy Hooker* star has settled down to run this fabulous B&B, that is, when she's not writing columns, producing theatre shows or poring over her next set of memoirs. The interior contains plenty of racy allusions to her past life, in leather, shag and stain-proof formica, but chambers are uniformly luxurious, particularly the princely garden hut. Xaviera's still something of a media star, and customers past and present are always dropping by. From the same culture who gave us Calvinism.

### MUSEUM SQUARE HOTEL

Map p110 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 671 95 96; [www.museumsquarehotel.nl](http://www.museumsquarehotel.nl); De Lairessestraat 7; s/d/tr from €109/119/149; ✕ 📍

A great location close to the Concertgebouw, this small, family-run hotel has rooms larger than Amsterdam standard for the price, with big windows and comfy beds. The superb staff are extremely helpful with planning your day out. Trams stop right outside the front door (as well as the Schiphol Interliner bus 370 – nice), but it's not noisy at all for guests staying on the street side.

### COLLECTOR

Map p110 **B&B €€**  
 ☎ 673 67 79; [www.the-collector.nl](http://www.the-collector.nl); De Lairessestraat 46hs; r €80-115; 📍

This B&B is a real find: just three rooms near the Concertgebouw. The 1914 building is spotless with contemporary renovations and furnished with museum-style displays of clocks, Amsterdam School furnishings, wooden shoes etc. Each room has a balcony and a TV, and the owner will buy food for you to prepare breakfast at your leisure; the kitchen is open all day.

### HOTEL AALDERS

Map p110 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 662 01 16; [www.hotelaalders.nl](http://www.hotelaalders.nl); Jan Luijkenstraat 13-15; s/tw/tr from €79/109/145; ✕ 📍  
 There are fancier hotels in town, but the family-owned Aalders is homely and well situated on a quiet street near the Museumplein. Each room in its two row homes is different (the old-style room has wood panelling and leaded windows), but all have wireless internet access. The breakfast room has a Venetian-glass chandelier. Huge rooms are available for large groups.

### HOTEL ACRO

Map p110 **Party Hotel €€**  
 ☎ 662 55 38; [www.acrohotel.nl](http://www.acrohotel.nl); Jan Luijkenstraat 44; s/d/tr/q €92/109/155/180; 📍  
 Once a bit austere, the Acro has given its '80s-décor rooms a useful facelift and the result is pleasant indeed. Rates are reasonable for the quiet location (near Museumplein), the bar is welcoming (it's just had a makeover from its big-hair club to more of a brown café), and the staff are warm and helpful. Maybe that's why so many British guests return year after year.

### HOTEL BEMA

Map p110 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 679 13 96; [www.bemahotel.com](http://www.bemahotel.com); Concertgebouwplein 19b; s from €45, d with/without bathroom €85/65; 📍  
 Climb the stairs to this seven-room hotel in a higgledy-piggledy mansion house across from the Concertgebouw and filled with African art. Expect extra-big doubles and breakfast in bed but no phone in the room. Staff can also arrange private apartments for up to four people.

## VONDELPARK & AROUND

An aura of wealth, history and privilege is inevitable in urban surrounds as beautiful as the Vondelpark. The difference here is that this neighbourhood is refreshingly free of class pretension. The various consular staff and bankers who casually jog in the park will be happy to confirm it.

### FUSION SUITES

Map p116 **Luxury Hotel €€€**  
 ☎ 618 46 42; [www.fusionsuites.com](http://www.fusionsuites.com); Roemer Visscherstraat 40; ste €245-275; ✕ 📍  
 Just a minute's walk from the hustle of Museumplein, and nestled in a quiet tree-

lined street, these spacious suites go right off the comfort charts without being over the top. Four-poster beds with Cocomat mattresses, free-standing baths, flat-screen computers and TVs, and tasteful décor in Eastern earth tones are just a few reasons you may choose never to go out. Personal touches abound, such as vases of fresh flowers, international newspapers and tasty sweetjams at breakfast (€22).

### HOTEL ROEMER

Map p116 **Boutique Hotel €€€**  
 ☎ 589 08 00; [www.vondelhotels.com](http://www.vondelhotels.com); Roemer Visscherstraat 8-10; d €155-255, ste €295-345 ✕ 📍  
 This cosy, beautifully designed hotel is an oasis of calm, with an excellent location close to the Vondelpark and the Museum Quarter. All rooms overlook either a quiet, leafy street or the stately back garden, have high ceilings and an abundance of natural light. Room 28 is typical of the gadgetry you'll find – flat-screen TVs, an iPod dock and a DVD player. Business people will appreciate the ergonomic workspaces and the room service. Breakfast (€23) is a bit pricey for what you get.

### HOTEL VONDEL

Map p116 **Boutique Hotel €€€**  
 ☎ 612 01 20; [www.vondelhotels.com](http://www.vondelhotels.com); Vondelstraat 28-30; r €85-185; ✕ 📍  
 Owned by the same attentive people who run [Hotel Roemer](#) (above), this chic establishment now consists of seven houses linked together after a recent makeover. They upgraded the rooms too, with minimalist yet comfy décor. Discounts are available in low season – check the website.

### HOTEL ZANDBERGEN

Map p116 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 676 93 21; [www.hotel-zandbergen.com](http://www.hotel-zandbergen.com); Willemsparkweg 205; s/d/tr/q €109/140/175/205; ✕ 📍  
 The Zandbergen stands out like sterling silver in a tray of plastic cutlery. The caring staff in this wonderful, nonsmoking hotel go overboard, the rooms are absolutely faultless and the generous breakfast brings raves from guests. Rooms at the rear have balconies overlooking a quiet courtyard. As in many Amsterdam hotels, the stairs are steep but there are nice rooms at ground level. The beautiful Vondelpark is just over the road, where the tram will get you to the centre in a jiffy.

### HESTIA HOTEL

Map p116 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 618 08 01; [www.hotel-hestia.nl](http://www.hotel-hestia.nl); Roemer Visscherstraat 7; s €85, d €99-140, tr/q €168/198  
 Friendly, family-run Hestia Hotel, with 18 rooms decorated in fresh blue and white, offers a quiet retreat after a day of sightseeing. Scrupulously neat rooms vary in size and height – some have balconies overlooking the Vondelpark. The stair-phobic can rejoice: there's an elevator here too.

### HOTEL PIET HEIN

Map p116 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 662 72 05; [www.hotelpiethein.nl](http://www.hotelpiethein.nl); Vossiusstraat 52-53; s/d €92/135; 📍  
 Located close to the museums and looking at the Vondelpark's fine old harbour, this immaculate hotel offers a startling variety of rooms (including good single 'business' rooms) in a quiet location. There is a relaxing bar that's open late, wi-fi throughout the hotel and a decent breakfast.

### OWL HOTEL

Map p116 **Inn €€**  
 ☎ 618 94 84; [www.owl-hotel.nl](http://www.owl-hotel.nl); Roemer Visscherstraat 1; s/d from €98/128; 📍  
 Some guests love this place so much that they send in owl figurines from all over the world. Staff are warm and welcoming, and the dapper, bright and quiet rooms come with lots of facilities (hairdryers, laptop plugs). Best of all, buffet breakfast (included in the price) is served in a serene, light-filled room overlooking a gorgeous garden.

### HOTEL DE FILOSOOF

Map p116 **Boutique Hotel €€**  
 ☎ 683 30 13; [www.hotelfilosoof.nl](http://www.hotelfilosoof.nl); Anna van den Vondelstraat 6; s/d from €111/125  
 A hotel owned by two sisters, with 38 rooms themed after philosophers. Sounds quaint, no? But it's also a professional, warm and well-run operation near the Vondelpark. There are larger rooms in town, but few more thoughtfully decorated: from lush furniture and over-the-top wallpaper to minimalist paeans to serenity. The variety of breakfast rooms may remind you of museums you've visited.

### FLYNT B&B

Map p116 **B&B €€**  
 ☎ 618 46 14; [www.flynt.nl](http://www.flynt.nl); 1e Helmersstraat 34; r €70-120; ✕ 📍  
 Flynt's building, on a quiet block off the Overtoom, is almost a century old, but the



look is contemporary, bright and spotless. Frank, the easy-going owner, will purchase breakfast food for you, and the kitchen is yours 24/7. The owners have cats and dogs, and your pets are welcome too. Rooms are nonsmoking, though hallways are not.

### BORGSMANN VILLA HOTEL

Map p116 Inn €€

☎ 673 52 52; [www.hotel-borgmann.nl](http://www.hotel-borgmann.nl); Koningslaan 48; d/q €107/145; ☒ ☒ ☒

One of the more refined options around the leafy rim of the Vondelpark, the Borgmann has comfortable, quiet, wi-fi-linked rooms that overlook an affluent residential street or, yes, the grand Vondelpark. The fourth floor is a bit cramped but other rooms are quite spacious. Seasonal offers can be sensational, so check the website. The British Consulate is right next door.

### APPLE INN HOTEL

Map p116 Inn €

☎ 662 78 94; [www.apple-inn.nl](http://www.apple-inn.nl); Koninginneweg 93; s/d from €59/79; ☒

A good solid find, in a nice residential area near the Vondelpark. Note that all doubles are twins, and the rooms (with peppy quilts meeting European hardwood) vary a lot in size, from enormous with big bathrooms to rather small – clear this up ahead of time. Whichever way you slice it, it's fine value with an easy tram ride to Leidseplein (five minutes).

### STAYOKAY VONDELPARK

Map p116 Hostel €

☎ 589 89 96; [www.stayokay.com](http://www.stayokay.com); Zandpad 5; dm

€24-30, tw €74; ☒ ☒

A blink away from the Vondelpark, this 535-bed hostel attracts over 75,000 guests a year – no wonder the lobby feels like a mini-UN. All bedrooms are nonsmoking, have lockers, a shower, a toilet and well-spaced bunks. There are lifts, a café, two restaurants and bike-hire opportunities. There's no curfew but the no-visitors-at-night, no-drugs policy is strictly enforced. From March to October and during public holidays the maximum stay is three nights. Discounts are offered in low season.

## DE PIJP

A quiet influx of capital for renovations means this area next to the Southern Canal Belt is an increasingly rewarding place to stay. Seeking

the frisson of an 'ethnic' neighbourhood with a modicum of comfort and a great restaurant scene? Then De Pijp is for you.

### HOTEL AALBORG

Map p119 Inn €€

☎ 676 03 10; [www.aalborg.nl](http://www.aalborg.nl); Sarphatipark 106;

s/d €80/99; ☒

More like a farmed-out Ikea than the Golden Age, but who's to quibble because the rooms at Aalborg are clean, tidy and newly installed. The front rooms enjoy a fine view overlooking the lush Sarphatipark. It's only a 10-minute bus ride from the centre and geared toward weekend breakers, so rates may plummet during the week.

### BETWEEN ART & KITSCH B&B

Map p119 B&B €€

☎ 679 04 85; [www.between-art-and-kitsch.com](http://www.between-art-and-kitsch.com);

Ruysdaelkade 75-2; s/d from €80/90, tr €120; ☒ ☒

Mondrian once lived here – that's part of the art – and the kitsch is bits like a crystal chandelier in the baroque room and the smiling brass Buddha nearby. The Art Deco room, meanwhile, has seriously gorgeous tile work and views of the Rijksmuseum. Husband and wife Ebo and Irene (and Ruysdael the Jack Russell terrier) are your hosts, 3½ storeys up on a quiet canalbank at the edge of De Pijp. Rooms are nonsmoking, though common areas are not.

### BICYCLE HOTEL AMSTERDAM

Map p119 Bicycle Hotel €€

☎ 679 34 52; [www.bicyclehotel.com](http://www.bicyclehotel.com); Van

Ostadestraat 123; d €115, s/d without bathroom

€65/80; ☒

If you're into the bed-and-bike thing, this is the place to go. Run by Marjolein, who loves pedal-power, this casual, friendly, green-minded hotel has rooms comfy and familiar, and serves a killer organic breakfast (included). You can hire popular carrier-bikes – great for city spins with children.

## PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

If you're used to thinking outside the box, welcome. The hotels of these eastern suburbs offer charms of a sort that are rare in the old centre: abundant greenery, cutting-edge architecture, the rippling expanse of the IJ

dotted with riverboats. The smart money comes here after the party downtown.

## PLANTAGE

### EDEN LANCASTER HOTEL

Map p122 International Hotel €€

☎ 535 68 88; [www.edenhotelgroup.com](http://www.edenhotelgroup.com); Plantage

Middenlaan 48; s/d from €90/109; ☒ ☒

This 93-room place next to a park is bigger than it looks, and a top-to-toe renovation a few years back has made it one of the smartest lodgings in the Plantage. Rooms all have TV, phone, free wi-fi and motifs of blonde wood, red brick, cream, and the stylised St Andrew's crosses of the city seal. Breakfast costs €14 and includes hot dishes.

### HOTEL PARKLANE

Map p122 Inn €€

☎ 622 48 04; [www.hotel-parklane.nl](http://www.hotel-parklane.nl); Plantage

Parklaan 16; s €75-95, d €100-110; ☒

This 12-room one-time dressmaker's shop is being renovated room by room by kindly owners who care about doing things right. The rooms (large by Dutch standards) are comfy and equipped with fridges; the baths are sparkling and modern with great water pressure; and the well-sorted buffet breakfast will keep you going into the afternoon.

### HOTEL REMBRANDT

Map p122 Inn €€

☎ 627 27 14; [www.hotelrembrandt.nl](http://www.hotelrembrandt.nl); Plantage

Middenlaan 17; s €73, d €95-115, tr/q €140/165; ☒

Although the hallways could stand a touch-up, the Rembrandt shines where it matters: rooms are spotless and have TVs, phones and coffeemakers and some have hardwood floors and bathtubs. The wood-panelled breakfast room is a beaut, with chandeliers and 17th-century paintings on linen-covered walls. Rooms 2 (large double with a balcony overlooking a small garden) and 21 (four-person, split-level, sunny and modern) offer plenty of bang for your buck.

### LILIANE'S HOME

Map p122 Inn €€

☎ 627 40 06; [l.meisen@zonnet.nl](mailto:l.meisen@zonnet.nl); Sarphatistraat

119; d from €90

Once Amsterdam's sole women-only inn, this seven-bedroom private home in a smart 'Herenhuis' recently began to allow male visitors, and that's a nice thing for you gents. It has loads of personality, rooms with huge windows (some with balconies),

and amenities including a TV (no phone), a fridge and books to read. Reservations are required, since there is no bell desk.

### HOTEL HORTUS

Map p122 Stoner Hotel €

☎ 625 99 96; [www.hotelhortus.com](http://www.hotelhortus.com); Plantage

Parklaan 8; dm €27, s/d €40/54; ☒

Facing the Botanical Garden, this old-shoe comfy, 20-room hotel has small doubles with or without showers (luck of the draw); all have a safe and a sink. It's run by the same crew as [Hotel Brian](#) (p213), so it's no surprise that the lounge is chock-full of young, happy stoners transfixed by the large-screen TV. Large rooms sleep up to eight people. Rates include a cooked breakfast.

## EASTERN DOCKLANDS

### MÖVENPICK HOTEL CITY CENTRE

Map p122 International Hotel €€€

☎ 519 12 00; [www.moevenpick-hotels.com](http://www.moevenpick-hotels.com); Piet

Heinkade 11; d €145-250; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

Situated on the water's edge next to the Passenger Terminal building, the fetching exterior of this 20-storey business hotel is layered with stripes of glass, green granite and white concrete. Views of the busy harbour, dotted with ferries, cruise ships and passing barges, are best from the picture windows on the upper floors. Rooms have relaxed contemporary décor, comfy beds, small but sleek bathrooms and lots of little extras. It's a good 10-minute walk to Centraal Station but there's an hourly shuttle during the day.

### LLOYD HOTEL

Map p122 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 561 36 36; [www.lloydhotel.com](http://www.lloydhotel.com); Oostelijke

Handelskade 34; d €80-300; ☒

This ultrastylish building used to be a hotel for migrants back in 1921, and many of the original fixtures still exist (tiles, cabinetry etc), combined with triumphs of more contemporary Dutch design. The result is a combination hotel, cultural centre and local gathering place. Rooms span one star (bathroom down the hall) to five star (plush and racquetball-court sized). Yet many are also so quirky and individualistic (teeny tiny doubles, bathtub in the centre, giant bed for eight) that some guests may be turned off. Accept it on its terms and you'll love it.

## OOSTERPARK & AROUND

The Oosterpark may look like a Saharan outpost on the map, but in reality it's just a short tram or bus ride away from the City Centre – and the accommodations here are spacious, quiet and comfy. While you're here, don't miss visiting the exotic Tropenmuseum (p128).

### HOTEL ARENA Map p129 Party Hotel €€

☎ 850 24 00; [www.hotelarena.nl](http://www.hotelarena.nl); 's Gravesandestraat 51; d €79-149, ste €154-204; 📍

With more facelifts than a Hollywood star, this building, bordering lush Oosterpark, has morphed from chapel to orphanage to backpackers hostel to, now, a modern, 121-room hotel with a trendy restaurant, café and nightclub. Minimalist rooms – 'designer industrial hospital' chic – are more Ikea than *Wallpaper\** magazine, but the large, split-level double rooms are a sun-drenched delight. Rooms in sections A, B, E and F tend to be quieter. Breakfast costs €12.50.

## OUTER DISTRICTS

### CAPTAIN'S PLACE Map pp58-9 Houseboat €€

☎ 419 81 19; [www.meesvof.nl](http://www.meesvof.nl); Levantkade 184; d €95-155

This charming number is set on a rebuilt ship, the *Pas Meprese*, in the former ore harbour of the Eastern Docklands. There are all of two rooms, both large and comfortably fitted out, with their own heated bathrooms. As the owner is a bit star-struck the quarters are dubbed Orion and Cassiopeia. The best part is the on-board garden for grazing (nice breakfast) and plain lazing, even in the foul Dutch weather because it has a sliding glass roof.

### HOTEL V Map pp58-9 International Hotel €€

☎ 662 32 33; [www.hotelv.nl](http://www.hotelv.nl); Victorieplein 42; s €80-90, d €120-145, t €170; 📍

This small hotel is a modish number, with a fresh, minimalist style with brilliant flashes of colour and a groovy fireplace. With only 24 understated rooms it's a personal and personable hotel with enough mod cons (including wi-fi) to keep hipsters happy while still being close to the bars of de Pijp.

### WINDKETEL Map pp58-9 Apartment €€

☎ 682 26 66; [www.windketel.nl](http://www.windketel.nl); Watertorenplein 8c; d €125; 📍

Built into an octagonal, three-storey tower from 1897, and once part of the municipal water works, the cute-as-a-button 'Wind Kettle' tops our list of romantic getaways in Amsterdam. There's just one apartment, but what a place – a kitchen and living room with state-of-the-art appliances, stereo, wi-fi and TV, a bathroom decked out in cosy tile and wood fittings, and a skylit bedroom directly under the sloping roof. It shares a courtyard with [Café-Restaurant Amsterdam](#) (p175) and the entertainment complex [Westergasfabriek](#) (p130).

### QBIC HOTEL Map pp58-9 Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 321 11 11; [www.qbichotels.com](http://www.qbichotels.com); Strawinsky-laan 241; r €39-139; ☒ 📍

Located in the World Trade Center office complex, this spanking new hotel pushes the design envelope with its 'Cubis', queen-sized beds and shower-washrooms melded into single monolithic units (note: no WC door, so intimacy is assured). You pay up front, and prices swing with demand like seats on cheapie airlines. Businessfolk will like its proximity to the RAI conference centre, and it's on the metro/tram networks.

### YOTEL Boutique Hotel €€

☎ 44 (0) 207 100 11 00; [www.yotel.com](http://www.yotel.com); Schiphol Airport Plaza; d from €85; 📍

As we went to press, Yotel had announced plans to open a branch of its Japanese-style capsule hotels at Schiphol Airport in early 2008. Prices for the standard 7-sq-metre cabins are time-based, starting at four hours for short layovers. It's a blessing for travellers who need to catch a red-eye flight.

### STAYOKAY AMSTERDAM ZEEBURG Hostel €

Map pp58-9 ☎ 551 31 90; [www.stayokay.com](http://www.stayokay.com); Timorplein 21; dm from €27, d/q from €60/120; 📍

Housed in a former school from the *fin-de-siecle*, the newest Stayokay (opened in summer 2007) is a bit removed from the centre's crowded hostels. Like this chain's other hostel-hotels (eg in [Vondelpark](#), p222), all bedrooms have their own bathroom and subtle design touches. Take tram 14 from Centraal Station, a 15-minute journey.

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## DAY TRIPS



# DAY TRIPS

If you're like many residents, you'll have trouble tearing yourself away from Amsterdam. But you can't say you've really seen the Netherlands until you venture beyond the city gates. There's a wealth of beauty, history and tradition within easy reach, and the slower pace of life seems a world away from the Dutch capital.

Prepare yourself for a region awash in clichés – the pointy laced hats, wooden clogs, tulips, cheese and windmills that define the Dutch to the outside world. Still, these items are more than decoration. If you look more closely you'll find a heritage still alive today, proving there's more to it all than skilful marketing (though there's plenty of that too).

The urban belt around the capital is called the Randstad, literally the 'rim city' that takes in a large portion of the Dutch population. These cities boast their own art, architecture and atmosphere that rival anything Amsterdam has to offer. Big industry looms in the south, and if you fly over at night you can't miss the radiant glow of greenhouses that nurture tomatoes, cucumbers and flowering plants.

But large swathes of this area are also surprisingly rural, with wide expanses of meadow interspersed with patches of pine forest. Stocks of cattle roam freely on the polders, the flat, marshy lands laced with drainage canals. Between the cities, nature-lovers are in their element: the polders make an ideal habitat for wild birds such as swans, herons or warblers, many of which nest in the tall grasses along the canals.

The fast, efficient Dutch railway network makes it a snap to get around. Cycle paths are everywhere, but don't bother to bring your own – most train stations have bike-rental shops charging around €7 per day, though you'll need to book ahead. Don't forget that discounts are available for holders of rail tickets.

All the following destinations lie within an hour's journey from Amsterdam by train (and if need be, by connecting bus). Get an early start and you might 'do' two locations without feeling rushed.

## CITIES & ART

Fine paintings can be found in collections across the Netherlands, and it's worth noting that first-rate galleries even a stone's throw from Amsterdam tend to be less crowded than in the capital. The cities following all have historic quarters and museum treasures that invite you to explore.

It's hard to know where to start, but the 17th-century heart of lovely **Haarlem** (p228), less than 20 minutes away, is always a good wager. At one time the city was more important in the art world than Amsterdam, so it's no surprise that Haarlem possesses one of the country's finest assemblies of Dutch paintings, at the Frans Hals Museum. There are also examples of the CoBrA art movement in museums nearby. The city will seem bite-sized after the capital, and most sites of interest are within a short stroll of the lively main square, Grote Markt, and its attractive cathedral.

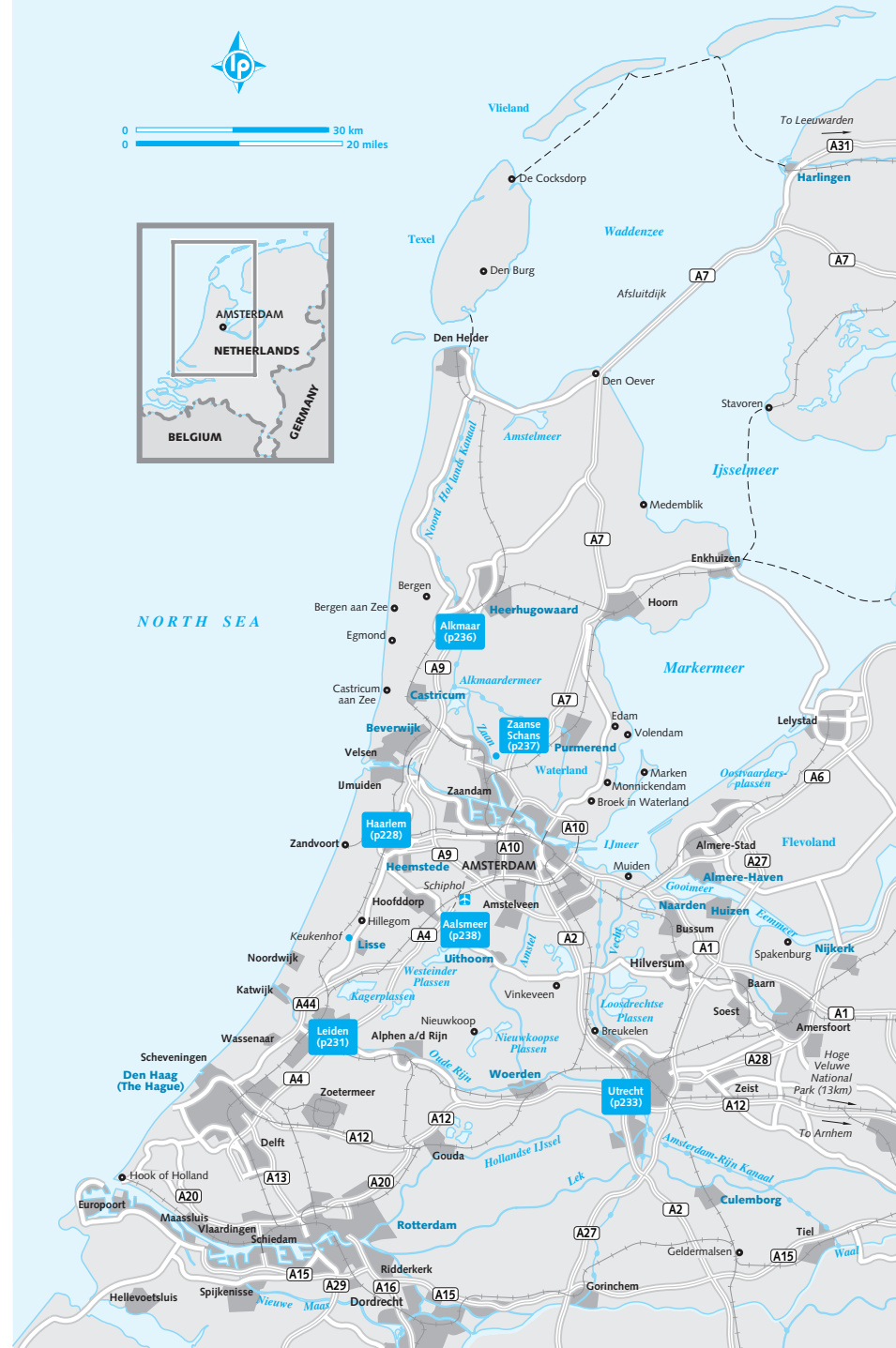
Rembrandt's birthplace, **Leiden** (p231), is an easy-going university town with several first-class museums, the world's oldest botanical garden, and a wealth of lively student pubs.

In the 17th century, the pilgrim fathers settled in Leiden before beginning their epic voyage to the New World. Some of its key artworks stem from the Renaissance era, such as the impressive triptych of *The Last Judgment* at the Lakenhal museum.

One look at the impressive canals of **Utrecht** (p233) and you'll believe it was a trading hub long before Amsterdam. Its soaring Domtoren recalls the church's formidable power in the Middle Ages. An outstanding collection of medieval art is housed in the Museum Het Catharijneconvent, while the Centraal Museum nearby has superb 16th-century portraits of the Civic Guard.

## CHEESE & WINDMILLS

Forget the cutesy postcards: this unlikely pair of icons helped make Holland what it is today, namely rich and dry. The first big wheels of Gouda and rubbery balls of Edam were originally produced near Amsterdam, and travelled well on sea voyages. The curds are still supplied by Frisian cows – inspiration for many a black-and-white milk jug – and these



cows graze on land that was once drained by windmills. Many of these graceful structures are listed monuments, and open as museums or shops throughout the region.

So, feel like doing the rounds? Then the Saturday cheese market at **Alkmaar** (p236), one of the last bastions of the traditional cheese guilds, is just the ticket. If it's windmills you crave, the place to feed the urging is at **Zaanse Schans** (p237), a kitschy but comely open-air museum village. Here you'll find a half-dozen of them twirling their arms in the air and churning out mustard, oil and dye.

## FLOWERS

The lovely tulip has been seducing Europeans since the 16th century, when an enterprising Dutch ambassador brought back (read: smuggled out) the first precious bulbs from the Near East. The Netherlands is now a major world supplier of all kinds of colourful and exotic blooms, and most thrive in the cool wet climate. They're much more than a commodity; the 'flower culture' means you'll see droves of people with a bunch tucked under one arm.

The sprawling bulb gardens of the **Keukenhof** (a former royal garden taken over by the flower trade – see the boxed text, p233) erupt into a riot of colour between March and May, and you'll find tulip fields scattered throughout North and South Holland. You can also visit the world's biggest flower auction that is held not far south of the capital, in the town of **Aalsmeer** (p238).

## HAARLEM

It's hard not to be enthusiastic about Haarlem, which has retained more of its 17th-century heritage than even Amsterdam. The wealth of historic buildings, leafy *hofjes* (courtyards) and old-world antique shops give the centre a real sense of history and grandeur, and its pretty bridges and winding alleys are just as charming as any in the Dutch capital.

The name Haarlem derives from *Haarloheim*, meaning a wooded place on high, sandy soil. You won't get nosebleeds from the altitude, but it's worth noting that the surrounding area used to be a huge lake, the Haarlemmermeer. The counts of Holland set up a toll post here and Haarlem quickly became the top inland port after Amsterdam. When the Spanish invaded in 1572, virtually the entire population was slaughtered after a

seven-month siege, but, against the odds, the community recovered quickly. Haarlem then soared into the prosperity of the Golden Age, attracting painters and artists from around Europe.

If you arrive by train, your first sight will be **Haarlem Centraal**, a glorious Art Deco masterpiece and hands-down the country's most beautiful train station. Walk to the old centre along Kruisstraat, and the town's wealth and elegance becomes apparent by the exclusive stores, art galleries and antique shops.

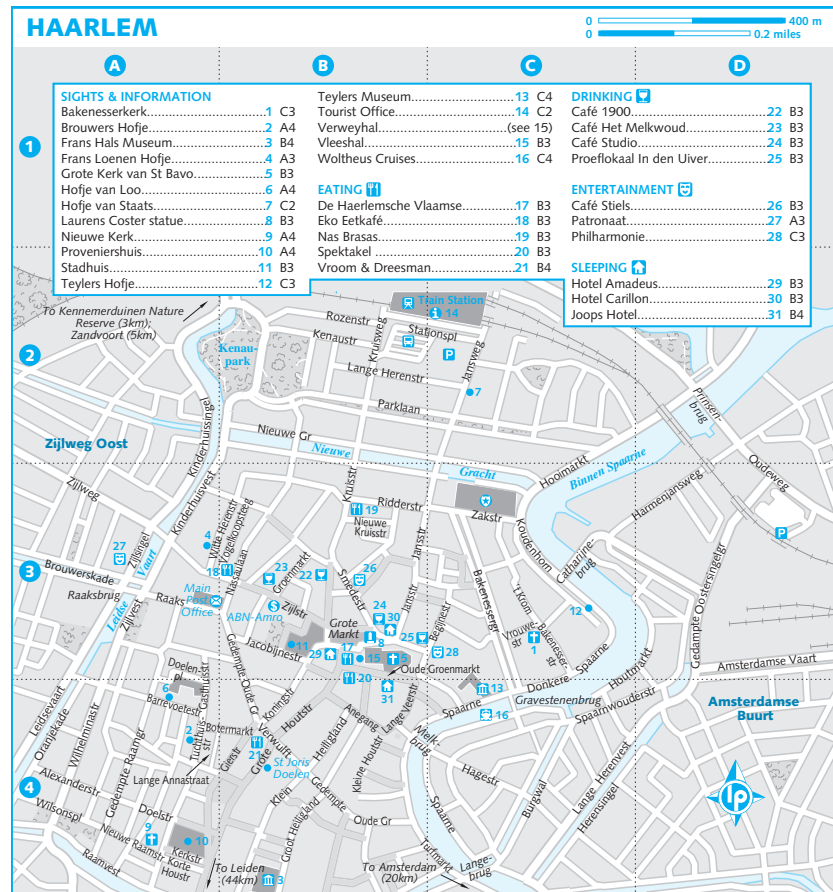
Lined with lovely cafés and restaurants, the Grote Markt is the city's beating heart. It's fronted by the 14th-century **Stadhuis** (Town Hall), which features a balcony where judgments from the high court were pronounced. The Counts' Hall contains some amazing 15th-century panel paintings, and if it's open you can take a peek.

Across from the Stadhuis looms the **Grote Kerk van St Bavo** (adult/child €2/1.25; ☎ 10am–4pm Mon–Sat), the Gothic cathedral with a 50m-high steeple. It contains some fine Renaissance artworks, but the star attraction is its **Müller organ** – one of the most magnificent in the world and played by both Mozart and Handel. There are tours in English on request, and free organ recitals take place at 3pm on Thursday July to early September and at 8.15pm every Tuesday from mid-May to mid-October. The organ stands 30m high and has about 5000 pipes, and the acoustics are terrific.

The square focuses on **De Hallen** (☎ 023-511 57 75; Grote Markt 16; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 11am–5pm Tue–Sat, noon–5pm Sun), halls including the 17th-century **Vleeshal**, a former meat market, and the **Verweyhal**; today they are annexes of the Frans Hals Museum. The Verweyhal contains the museum's collection of modern art, including Dutch impressionists and CoBrA artists. On the square north of the Grote Kerk is the **Laurens Coster statue**, whom Haarlemmers believe has a claim, along with Gutenberg, to be called the inventor of moveable type.

Off Grote Houtstraat to the south stands the **Proveniershuis**, the former headquarters of the Joris Doelen (Civic Guards of St George), which started life as an almshouse. Its wonderful old *hofje* is one of Haarlem's prettiest, and like all *hofjes* it provides clues about the origins of the Dutch social state.

Others *hofjes* worth a look include the **Brouwers Hofje** (Tuchthuisstraat 8), which lodged the brewers' guild; the **Frans Loenen Hofje** (Witte



### TRANSPORT: HAARLEM

**Direction** 20km west

**Travel time** 15 to 20 minutes

**Train** Services to Haarlem are frequent (€3.60, up to six per hour); the Grote Markt is a 500m walk to the south.

**Car** From the ring road west of the city, take the N200 which becomes the A200

Herenstraat 24), pared out of a merchant's estate; the **Hofje van Loo** (Barvoetstraat 7), a former women's hospital; the **Hofje van Staats** (Jansweg 39), one of the town's largest and still occupied by older women; and the unusually grand **Teylers Hofje** (Koudenhorn 144), built by the founder of the Teylers Museum. Most *hofjes* are open 10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday.

Haarlem has two excellent museums that can be visited in a day. A short stroll south of Grote Markt, the **Frans Hals Museum** (☎ 023-511 57 75; www.franshalsmuseum.nl; Groot Heiligland 62; adult/child €9.50/free; ☎ 11am–5pm Tue–Sat, noon–5pm Sun) is a must for anyone interested in the Dutch masters. Kept in a poorhouse where Hals spent his final years, the collection focuses on the 17th-century Haarlem School; its pride and joy are eight group portraits of the Civic Guard that reveal Hals' exceptional attention to mood and psychological tone. Look out for works by other greats such as Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Jacob van Ruysdael.

Among the museum's other treasures are the works of Hals' teacher, Flemish artist Carel van Mander: stunning illustrations of the human anatomy, all ceiling-high with biblical and mythological references.



The **Teylers Museum** (☎ 023-516 09 60; Spaarne 16; adult/child €7/2; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), the oldest museum in the country (1778), has an eclectic display of everything from drawings by Michelangelo and Raphael to intriguing 18th-century inventions. There's an amazing old electrostatic machine that conjures up visions of mad scientists, with batteries the size of a milk wagon. Be sure to visit the magnificent, sky-lit **Ovale Zaal** (Oval Room) containing many natural-history specimens in elegant glass display cases on two levels. The magnificent interiors alone are worth the entry price.

Northeast of the museum is the striking **Bakenesserkerk** (nr Vrouwestraat & Bakenesserstraat; ☹ closed to the public), a 15th-century church with a curious steeple of wood and sandstone. These materials were chosen because the Grote Kerk proved too weak to support a heavy tower. In the evening the steeple glows orange from the lamplight within.

Canal boat tours are run by **Woltheus Cruises** (☎ 023-535 77 23; www.woltheuscruises.nl; adult/child €6.50/3.50; ☹ 1st tour noon). These tours (also provided in English) leave from opposite the Teylers Museum six times most days from March to October.

## INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (☎ 0900 616 16 00, per min €0.50; www.vvvzk.nl; Stationsplein 1; ☹ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Mar)

## EATING

**De Haerlemsche Vlaamse** (☎ 023-532 59 91; Spekstraat 3; regular French fries €1.70) A *frites* house and local institution.

**Eko Eetkafé** (☎ 023-532 65 68; Zijlstraat 39; mains €7-18) An offshoot of Eko organic foods, this obliging little eatery offers fish and vegetarian dishes with a clear conscience and ethnic accents.

**Nas Brasas** (☎ 023-532 88 02; Kruisstraat 13; tapas €5-9) This lively tapas joint has a Spanish gusto that keeps up handily with Dutch conviviality. The tapas menu is huge, and a second round is practically a given.

**Spektakel** (☎ 023-523 38 41; Spekstraat 4; mains €16-20) Kangaroo, ostrich and Australian emu are among worldly dishes at this atmospheric diner with table views of the Grote Kerk.

**Vroom & Dreesman** (☎ 0900 235 83 62; Grote Houtstraat 70; mains €5-12) The top floors of this department store house a huge family-oriented buffet

restaurant with a gorgeous view, especially from the panelled upper gallery.

## DRINKING

**Café 1900** (☎ 023-531 82 83; Bartelrijorstraat 10) An authentic little gem of a brown café with a *fin-de-siècle* interior and long bar perfect for propping up after a day out and about.

**Café Het Melkwoud** (☎ 023-531 35 35; Zijlstraat 63) This crunchy brown café, named after a Dylan Thomas radio play, is a great place to sample a welter of Dutch and Belgian brews.

**Café Studio** (☎ 023-513 00 33; Grote Markt 25) A genteel watering hole during the day, this grand café-bar with cathedral views becomes flirt central after dark.

**Proeflokaal in den Uiver** (☎ 023-532 53 99; Riviermarkt 13) Housed in an old fishmonger's, this quirky old place has shipping doodads and a schooner sailing right over the bar. There's jazz on Thursday and Sunday evenings.

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Café Stiels** (☎ 023-531 69 40; Smedestraat 21) For jazz and rhythm & blues, the back stage here hosts bands almost every night from 10pm onwards.

**Patronaat** (☎ 023-517 58 58; Zijlzingel 2) Haarlem's top music and dance club attracts bands with banging tunes. Events in this cavernous venue usually start around 7pm or 9pm.

**Philharmonie** (☎ 023-512 12 12; Lange Begijnestraat 11) This venerable concert hall emerged from a recent facelift with its classical face intact, and features music from across the spectrum. The orchestra, Philharmonie Haarlem, ranks among the best in the Netherlands.

## SLEEPING

**Hotel Amadeus** (☎ 023-532 45 30; www.amadeus-hotel.com; Grote Markt 10; s/d incl breakfast €60/85; ☎) Nestled in a row of old gabled houses on the main square.

**Hotel Carillon** (☎ 023-531 05 91; www.hotelcarillon.com; Grote Markt 27; with/without bathroom s €60/40, d €80/65) Great deal on the Grote Markt – a bit snug, but comfy and a primo location. Breakfast is included.

**Joopsh Hotel** (☎ 023-532 20 08; www.joopshotel.com; Groenmarkt 20; r or studio from €95; ☎) This friendly hotel has 100-plus quarters spread over an entire block; items from this former antique shop provide the ambience.

## LEIDEN

This pretty, easy-going town is home to the country's oldest university, the alma mater of Descartes. Leiden's 20,000 students make up a big chunk of the population and lend a young, dynamic ambience to the place. Another claim to fame: it's Rembrandt's birthplace.

The university was a gift from William the Silent for withstanding two Spanish sieges in 1574. It was a terrible time, ending when the sea beggars arrived and repelled the invaders. But one-third of the residents starved before the Spaniards retreated on 3 October (the town's big festival day). According to lore, the Spanish left behind a kettle of *hutspot* (hotchpotch), and today it's still a staple of the Dutch kitchen.

Wealth from the linen industry helped to make Leiden rich, and provided a fertile atmosphere for artists during the 17th century. The great Dutch painters Rembrandt, Jan Steen and Jan van Goyen were all from Leiden, yet the city has only one Rembrandt painting, even though the master lived here for 26 years.

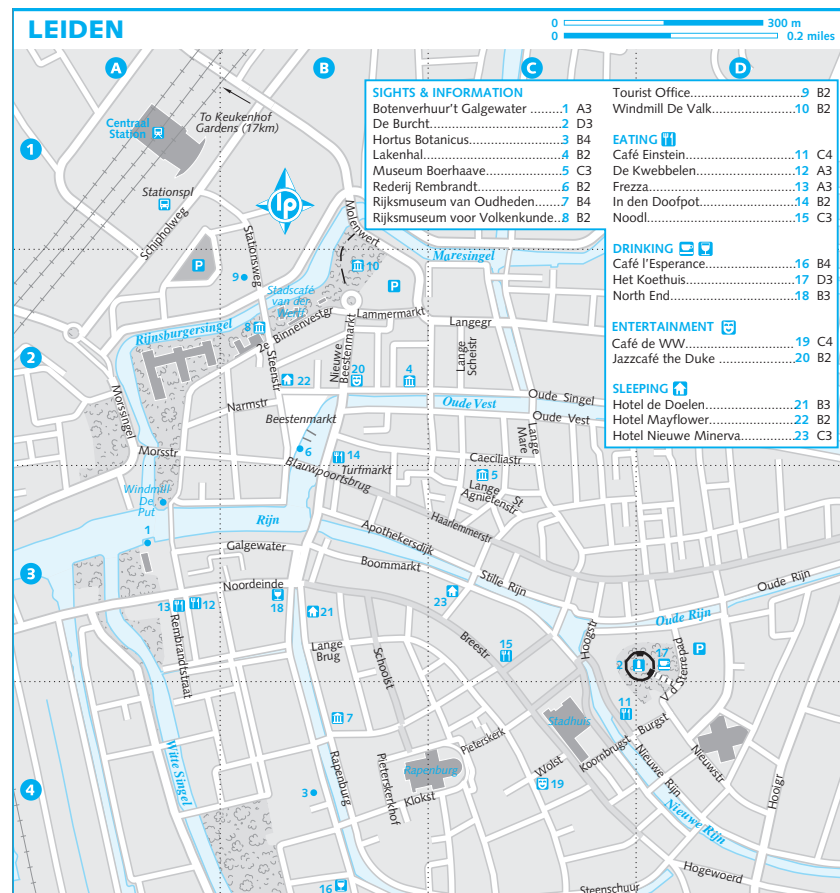
## TRANSPORT: LEIDEN

**Direction** 45km southwest

**Travel time** 35 minutes

**Train** NS runs services from Amsterdam six times per hour (€7.60)

**Car** From the southwest point of the A10 ring road, take the A4





Leiden is right up there with the great historic cities of the Netherlands. As you get further south from its supermodern Centraal Station, the city's traditional character unfolds. A five-minute walk takes you into Leiden's district of historic waterways, the most notable being the Oude Rijn and the Nieuwe Rijn. They meet at Oudegracht to form a canal, simply called the Rijn.

**De Burcht** (admission free; ☀ sunrise-sunset), an 11th-century citadel on an artificial hill, lost its protective functions as the city grew around it. Now it's a park with lovely places to view the steeples and rooftops, and a wonderful café at its base.

The **Rijksmuseum van Oudheden** (National Museum of Antiquities; ☎ 0900 660 06 00, per min €0.10; Rapenburg 28; adult/child 4-17yr €8.50/5.50; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) has a world-class collection of Greek, Roman and Egyptian artefacts, the pride of which is the extraordinary Temple of Taffeh, a gift from former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to the Netherlands for helping to save ancient Egyptian monuments from flood.

A sister collection, the **Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde** (National Ethnology Museum; ☎ 071-516 88 00; Steenstraat 1; adult/child 4-12yr €7.50/4; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun), focuses on the former Dutch colonies and the cultures of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, much like Amsterdam's **Tropenmuseum** (p128).

The lush **Hortus Botanicus** (☎ 071-527 72 49; Rapenburg 73; adult/child €4/2.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar), Europe's oldest botanical garden (1587), is home to the country's oldest descendants of the Dutch tulips. It's a wonderful place to relax, with explosions of tropical colour and a fascinating steamy greenhouse.

The 17th-century **Lakenhal** (Cloth Hall; ☎ 071-516 53 60; Oude Singel 28-32; adult/child under 18yr €4/free; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) houses the Municipal Museum, with an assortment of works by Old Masters, as well as period rooms and temporary exhibits. The 1st floor has been restored to the way it would have looked when Leiden was at the peak of its prosperity.

Leiden's landmark windmill museum, **De Valk** (The Falcon; ☎ 071-516 53 53; 2e Binnenvestgracht 1; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), has been carefully restored, and many consider it the best example of its kind. Its arms are free to turn 'whenever possible' and can still grind the ol' grain.

A stuffed elephant greets you at **Naturalis – Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum** (National Museum of Natural History; ☎ 071-568 76 00; Darwinweg 2; adult/child 4-12yr €9/5; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun), a large, well-funded collection of all the usual dead critters and, notably, the million-year-old Java Man discovered by Dutch anthropologist Eugene Dubois in 1891. It's 300m west of the town centre.

Leiden University was an early centre for Dutch medical research. You can see the often-grisly results (five centuries of pickled organs, surgical tools and skeletons) at the **Museum Boerhaave** (☎ 071-521 42 24; Lange St Agnietenstraat 10; adult/concession €6/3; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun).

There are leisurely one-hour canal boat tours of the channel around the old town centre with **Rederij Rembrandt** (☎ 071-513 49 38; www.rederij-rembrandt.nl; Beestenmarkt; adult/child €6/4; ☹ 11am-5.30pm Mar-Oct) with commentary (English available). For a more intimate experience, hire a canoe or kayak and navigate the canals yourself with **Botenverhuur 't Galgewater** (Boat Hire Galgewater; ☎ 071-514 97 90; www.galgewater.nl; Galgewater 44a; per hr €5; ☹ 11am-6pm Oct-May, 11am-10pm Jun-Sep). It also has a quirky little café selling coffee and lemonade.

## INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (☎ 0900 222 23 33, per min €0.50; www.hollandrijnland.nl; Stationsweg 2d; ☹ 11am-5.30pm Mon, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat year-round, 11am-3pm Sun mid-Apr–Aug)

## EATING

**Café Einstein** (☎ 071-512 53 70; Nieuwe Rijn 19; mains lunch €2.75-10, dinner €12.75-20; ☹ lunch & dinner) It's a relaxed café with a student vibe, river views and lovely waterside setting. There's a French menu except for Sunday and Monday, when it goes Thai.

**De Kwebbelen** (☎ 071-512 61 90; Noordeinde 19; mains €12-20, 3-course menu €19.50; ☹ dinner) The most fun restaurant in Leiden, with a kitschy menu ('Jack the Ripper' spare ribs) but always worth the ride.

**Frezza** (☎ 071-512 21 15; Rembrandtstraat 2; mains €8; ☹ dinner) A bit of a Leiden hot spot, Frezza has tasty dishes such as oven-baked quail in honey-thyme sauce for only €8; just imagine what deliciousness the Menu Frezza (€29) holds.

## DETOUR: KEUKENHOF FLOWER GARDENS

Covering some 32 hectares, the **Keukenhof** (☎ 025-246 55 55; www.keukenhof.nl; Stationsweg 166, Lisse; adult/child/senior €13/6/12; ☹ 8am-7.30pm late March-late May, last entry 6pm) is the world's largest bulb-flower garden, attracting nearly 800,000 visitors during a mere eight weeks every year. The virtues of the online ticket facility should be obvious.

The gardens were opened in 1949 with the idea of having a showplace for European growers to show off their hybrids. This isn't just any old trade show, however. Nature's talents are combined with artificial precision to create a wonder of landscaping where millions of tulips, narcissi and daffodils blossom perfectly in place and exactly on time. You can easily spend half a day here filling your camera's digital memory.

If the temps have been wilting, don't worry – fresh blooms are planted by helping hands for the duration of the season. Special exhibits are held in the pavilions around the site, and there are cafés and refreshment stands throughout.

Opening dates vary slightly from year to year, so check before setting out. During opening season, Connexion runs special Keukenhof Express buses from Leiden Centraal Station (six 'strips' on the *strippenkaart*, 20 minutes, three times hourly).

**In den Doofpot** (☎ 071-512 24 34; Turfmarkt 9; mains lunch €8-12, dinner €12-30; ☹ lunch & dinner) There's little chance you'll walk away hungry from this elegant eatery named after a clever Dutch pun. Expect twists on Dutch home-style cooking with French touches.

**Noodl** (☎ 071-513 92 73; Breestraat 88a; dishes €8-16; ☹ lunch & dinner) Trendy little dim-sum joint usually buzzing with students.

## DRINKING

**Café l'Esperance** (☎ 071-512 16 00; Kaiserstraat 1) Long, dark and handsome, all decked out in nostalgic wood panelling and overlooking the canal, ooh...this place is pumping with people in summer and often has live music.

**Het Koethuis** (☎ 071-512 16 88; Burgsteeg 13) On a sunny day, it's hard to beat the terrace tables just outside the grand Burcht gate where all of humankind gathers for an afternoon coffee or *borrel* (drinkingpoo of your choice).

**North End** (☎ 071-512 15 41; Noordeinde 55) This superb English-style pub is full of warmth, cosy nooks and character. It comes complete with its very own 'bourbon alley' (not very English, granted) and patented beer *strippenkaart* (strip ticket).

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Café de WW** (☎ 071-512 59 00; Wolsteeg 6) On Friday and Saturday, live rock can expand to an impromptu stage in the alley with crowds trailing up to the main street. On other nights there's a DJ.

**Jazzcafé the Duke** (☎ 071-566 15 85; Oude Singel 2) 'If we don't have it, you don't need it', is its motto, and amid this cool-cat interior of yellow, vintage jazz posters, the fine live jazz never makes you doubt it.

## SLEEPING

**Hotel de Doelen** (☎ 071-512 05 27; www.dedoelen.com; Rapenburg 2; s/d €75/95; ☹) It has a slightly faded air of classical elegance; some canalside rooms are larger and better appointed.

**Hotel Mayflower** (☎ 071-514 26 41; www.hotelmayflower.nl; Beestenmarkt 2; s/d/tr €65/80/95; ☹) These spacious quarters are bright and inviting, with comfy furnishings and lots of trimmings along the pilgrim theme.

**Hotel Nieuwe Minerva** (☎ 071-512 63 58; www.nieuwminerva.nl; Boommarkt 23; s/d €80/110; ☹) Located in six 16th-century canalside houses, this central hotel has themed rooms, including a room with a bed in which King Lodewijk Bonaparte (aka Louis Bonaparte) slept.

## UTRECHT

Breathe in the history in the Netherlands' oldest city, picturesque Utrecht. A major political and religious centre during the Middle Ages, it had some 40 magnificent churches dotting the city. Today the French Gothic cathedral, the Domtoren, with 50 melodious bells, towers above the town. It's the tallest in the Netherlands, and the views from the panoramic tower (stretching as far as Amsterdam) are spectacular.

Find your way through the building dust (Utrecht's centre is a major work site through to 2013) and you'll emerge into a beautiful and vibrant old-world city, ringed by striking canal wharves going back to the 13th century. Well below street level, the wharves are unique in all of the Netherlands, and the streets alongside brim with shops, restaurants and cafés.

In summer, Utrecht is festival central, with offerings such as jazz (with musicians seemingly on every corner) and the Netherlands Film Festival in September. On top of that,

## UTRECHT

**SIGHTS & INFORMATION**

Centraal Museum.....	1	C3
De Oude Hortus.....	2	C3
Domkerk.....	3	C2
Domtoren.....	4	C2
Lovers Utrecht Canal Boats.....	5	B2
Museum Het Catharijneconvent.....	6	C3
Nationaal Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement.....	7	B2
Tourist Office.....	8	B2
Universiteitsmuseum.....	(see 2)	

**EATING**

Blauw.....	9	B2
Café le Journal.....	10	B2
Deeg.....	11	C3
Oudaen.....	12	B2
Polman's.....	13	C2

**DRINKING**

Café Ledig Erf.....	14	C4
Café België.....	15	C2
Winkel van Sinkel.....	16	B2

**ENTERTAINMENT**

Springhaver Theater.....	17	B3
Tivoli.....	18	C3

**SLEEPING**

Grand Hotel Karel V.....	19	B3
Strowis Budget Hostel.....	20	C1

## TRANSPORT: UTRECHT

**Direction** 40km southeast

**Travel time** 30 minutes

**Train** NS runs about five services per hour (€6.40)

**Car** From the Amsterdam ring road, take the A2

the city's student community of 40,000 is the largest in the country, making it one very infectious place.

The striking **Domtoren** (Cathedral tower; ☎ 030-236 00 10; Domplein 9-10; adult/child/concession €7.50/4.50/6.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun & Mon, guided tours at 2pm, 4pm & 6pm) is 112m high, and you can climb its 465 steps for a magnificent view. Several hundred years ago you would have seen nearly 40 cathedrals from this vantage point, all laid out in the shape of a cross. The tower took

some 300 years to complete, and definitely had staying power: in 1674 the North Sea winds reached hurricane force and the nave, which wasn't quite as robust, blew down and opened up the gap on today's square where the cathedral resides. You can see the old extents of the nave, and visit the **Domkerk**, the surviving chancel of the cathedral with a few tombs within.

Another key point of interest is the undeniably photogenic canal, **Oudegracht**, the scene of many a wedding photo. At night, the bend in this canal is illuminated by lamplight. Stretching down toward the southern tip of the old town, the canal is at its most evocative, and the streets are unexpectedly quiet. A section of the Singel called the Stadsbuitengracht has its own turn as a lovely canal on the eastern side of the old quarter, where it follows parkland along the site of the old fortifications.

Of over a dozen museums, the **Museum Het Catharijneconvent** (☎ 030-231 72 96; Nieuwegracht 63; adult/child/senior €8.50/4.50/7.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) is the leader, with the finest collection of medieval religious art in the Netherlands. All but the most jaded art-lover will marvel at the beautiful illuminated manuscripts, carvings and robes.

Others include the **Centraal Museum** (☎ 030-236 23 62; Nicolaaskerkhof 10; adult/concession €8/6; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun), covering applied arts and Utrecht School paintings. There's a bit of De Stijl to boot, including the world's most extensive collection of Gerrit Rietveld's works, a feast for minimalists. There's even a 12th-century Viking longboat that was dug out of the local mud.

The **Universiteitsmuseum** (☎ 030-253 80 88; Lange Nieuwstraat 106; adult/child 4-17yr €7/3.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a re-created 19th-century classroom, historic dentistry tools (is it safe?) and way too many models of medical maladies. You can find solace out back in **De Oude Hortus**, the old botanical garden, along with all the other visiting dentophobes. The venerable garden has trees and plants collected by the Dutch during their world exploits.

The **National Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement** (National Museum from Musical Clock to Street Organ; ☎ 030-231 27 89; Steenweg 6; adult/child/senior €7/4/6; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a splendid assembly of musical machines from the 18th century onward. These are demonstrated with gusto during the hourly tours. Most impressive are the street and fairground organs from around Europe.

Just east of town, the **Rietveld-Schröderhuis** (☎ 030-236 23 10; Prins Hendrikklaan 50; adult/child under 13yr/child 13-18yr €16/8/13; ☎ 11am-5pm, reservations strongly advised) is a Unesco-protected landmark, adhering to the 'form follows function' creed with amazing invention.

Boat trips with **Lovers Utrecht** (☎ 030-272 01 11; nr Lange Vijverstraat & Oudegracht; 1hr boat trip adult/concession €7/5) trace a circular route through the deep canals of the old town. The tours provide a unique perspective on the city, not least because the water lies a couple of metres below street level.

## INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (VVV Utrecht; ☎ 0900 128 87 32, per min €0.50; www.utrechtyourway.nl; Vinkenburg 19; ☎ noon-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, 9.30am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Sep)

## EATING

**Blauw** (☎ 030-234 24 63; Springweg 64; set menu from €21; ☎ dinner) Blauw has worked hard to make

Indonesian food trendy in Utrecht, or at least popular. Quality is the key, and the rice table, comprising 14 tasty little dishes, is a winner.

**Deeg** (☎ 030-233 11 04; Lange Nieuwstraat 71; 3-course menu €31; ☎ dinner) Acclaimed as much for its fresh, organic, creative cooking as the stylish décor, it's in a quiet area south of the action.

**Café le Journal** (☎ 030-236 48 39; Neude 32; mains €10-22; ☎ lunch & dinner) This classy grand café is made for people-watching on the busy square, with its crispy fresh salads a running favourite.

**Oudaen** (☎ 030-231 18 64; Oudegracht 99; mains €10-23; ☎ lunch & dinner) The best choice along this popular stretch of canal, the Oudaen is set in a restored 14th-century banquet hall. It offers salads, steaks and succulent seafood, as well as its own in-house brew.

**Polman's** (☎ 030-231 63 88; nr Jansdam & Keistraat; mains €19.50, 3-course menus from €32.50; ☎ dinner) Diners are welcomed in an elegant former ballroom with ceiling frescoes, a hangover from its days as an elite gentlemen's club. The French and Italian meals are honed for the discriminating palate.

## DRINKING

**Café België** (☎ 030-231 26 66; Oudegracht 196; snacks €3-8) An absolute mecca for beer-lovers, the België stocks examples from very many of Benelux's brewers. Order nuts under the inflatable shark.

**Café Ledig Erf** (☎ 030-231 75 77; Tolsteegbrug 3) This classy pub overlooks a confluence of canals at the southern tip of town. Patrons gather on tables around the oversized chessboard on the terrace.

**Winkel van Sinkel** (☎ 030-230 30 30; Oudegracht 158) This 19th-century building houses a grand café, nightclub and restaurant with a divine interior. It was once the Netherlands' first department store – check out the green statues of females that buckled the loading cranes.

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Tivoli** (☎ 030-231 14 91; Oudegracht 245) This former monastery, now a cavernous dance hall with medieval chandeliers, remains a fixture on Utrecht's student music scene.

**Springhaver Theater** (☎ 030-230 30 30; Springweg 52) This Art Deco complex houses intimate cinemas that screen art-house and independent films, and has a great in-house café.



## SLEEPING

**Grand Hotel Karel V** (☎ 030-233 75 55; www.karelv.nl; Geertebloerker 1; s/d from €210/230) This place is a lavishly converted 14th-century building, with flawless service.

**Strowis Budget Hostel** (☎ 030-238 02 80; www.strowis.nl; Boothstraat 8; s & d €57.50, dm €14.50-17.50) A 17th-century building and former squat that's been lovingly restored.

## ALKMAAR

If ever there was a cheese town, Alkmaar is it. Most visitors come to this picturesque town for the traditional **cheese market** (Waagplein; ☎ 10am-12.30pm Fri Apr-early Sep), dating back to the 17th century.

But the city is more than just a purveyor of curdled milk. It holds a special place in Dutch hearts as the first town, in 1573, to repel occupying Spanish troops, by opening the locks and flooding their hapless assailants with seawater.

On Friday mornings, waxed rounds of *kaas* (cheese) are ceremoniously stacked on the main square. Soon, porters appear in colourful hats (denoting the cheese guild),

and dealers in white smocks insert a hollow rod to extract a cheese sample, and sniff and crumble to check fat and moisture content. Once deals are struck, the porters whisk the cheeses on wooden sledges to the old cheese scale, accompanied by a zillion camera clicks. It's primarily for show – nowadays the dairy co-ops have a lock on the cheese trade. Still, as living relics go it's a colourful show.

Lording over this spectacle, the **Waagebouw** (Weigh House, 1390) also houses the tourist office where you can pick up a walking tour of Alkmaar's historic buildings (€2) covering historical sights. Inside you'll also find the **Hollands Kaasmuseum** (Dutch Cheese Museum; ☎ 072-511 42 84; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Thu,

9am-4pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sat late Mar-early Nov), a reverential display of cheese-making utensils, photos and a curious stock of paintings by 16th-century female artists. The mechanical tower **carillon** (☎ 6.30pm & 7.30pm Thu, noon & 1pm Sat, 11am & noon Fri mid-Apr–mid-Sep) with jousting knights still springs to life.

Across the square, the **Nationaal Biermuseum** (☎ 072-511 38 01; Houtuil 1; adult/child €3/1.75; ☎ 1-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-4pm Sat & Sun) has a decent collection of beer-making equipment and wax dummies showing how the suds were made. The rare video of Dutch beer commercials since the 1950s is a real howler. Choose from 30 beers (eight on draught) in the friendly bar after your tour.

The **Stedelijk Museum** (☎ 072-511 07 37; Canadaplein 1; adult/child €4.50/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) is overlooked by many visitors, which is a shame because its collection of oils by the Dutch masters is first-rate. There are life-sized portraits of Alkmaar nobles and historic scenes of the city in decline after the Golden Age. In the upstairs gallery, Charley Toorop's painting of the cheese bearers with grotesque features still stirs controversy.

The **Grote Kerk** (Kerkplein; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; admission Jun-Aug €4, Sep-May €2.50) reminds us that Noord Hollanders are organ-lovers. The most famous here is the little 'Swallow Organ' (1511) in the north ambulatory. The 17th-century organ built by Jaco van Campen dominates the nave. Organ recitals take place from noon to 12.30pm and 1pm to 1.30pm June to August, and Wednesday evenings in July and August.

The **Stadhuis** (Town Hall) dates from the Renaissance.

**Canal boat tours** (☎ 072-511 77 50; www.woltheuscruises.nl; adult/child €6.50/3.50; ☎ every 20min from 9.30am Apr-Oct) with multilingual commentary depart from Mient near the Waag.

## INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (☎ 072-511 42 84; www.vvvalkmaar.nl; Waagplein 2; ☎ 1-5pm Mon, 10am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat).

## EATING

**De Tromp Kaashuis** (☎ 072-511 34 22; Magdalenestraat 11) If you're looking to grab some cheese after seeing so much of it, check out this quality certified shop with Dutch and French cheeses stacked everywhere you look.

**Het Hof van Alkmaar** (☎ 072-512 12 22; Hof van Sonoy 1; lunch €3.50-13, dinner mains €16-20; ☎ lunch & dinner

Tue-Sun) This place offers creative cuisine in a former 15th-century monastery, with courtyard seating.

**Henry's Grand Café** (☎ 072-511 32 83; Houtuil 34; lunch €3-12, dinner mains €10-23; ☎ lunch & dinner) A grand café overlooking the main square with a comprehensive menu and good range of local beers.

**Pâtisserie Culinaire** (☎ 072-511 29 58; Houtuil 13; mains €5-16) This buzzing, artsy café offers freshly made filled rolls, quiche and big salads that spill off your plate. It's the perfect spot to sip a coffee and watch the world go by.

## DRINKING

**Café Vrije Vogelhuis** (☎ 072-511 24 58; Houtuil 20) The place for beer and billiards with rollicking Dutch folk music (eg 'Tante Leen') and top-40 hits.

**Café Lindeboom** (☎ 072-512 17 43; Verdrongenoord 114) Over by the old fish market is this cosy bar where talkative locals linger on the canal terrace.

## ZANSE SCHANS

This kitsch open-air museum on the Zaan River is a bit of a guilty pleasure. It's undeniably touristy and tacky in parts, but picturesque because of its gardens and canal setting, so it's still a lot of fun.

The six working **windmills** along the riverbanks are the highlight and apart from the villagers, who actually live and earn their keep here, are the most authentic thing about the place. It was once the world's first light-industrial region, with more than 700 windmills powering flour and paint production.

One mill sells fat jars of its freshly ground mustard, while the others turn out pigments,

## TRANSPORT: ZANSE SCHANS

**Direction** 10km northwest  
**Travel time** 20 to 30 minutes

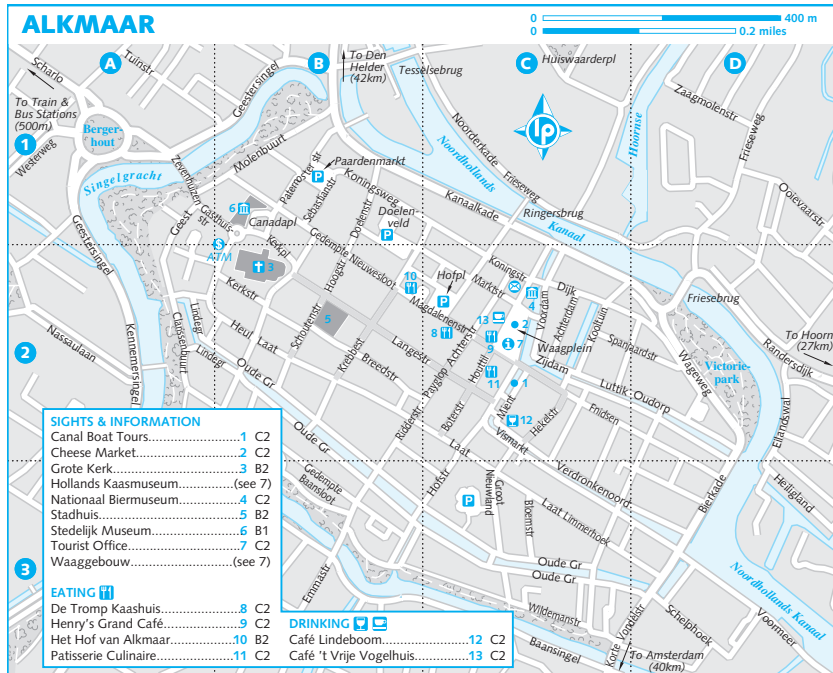
**Train** In summer, take the Connexion bus 91 from Amsterdam Centraal (€2.50, 20 minutes, hourly). The rest of the year board the train towards Alkmaar and get off at Koog Zaandijk (€2.80, 20 minutes, four times hourly), and walk the 1km to Zaanse Schans.

**Car** Travel to the northwestern side of the city on the A10 ring road, and take the A8 turn-off. Exit at Zaandijk.

## TRANSPORT: ALKMAAR

**Direction** 35km northwest  
**Travel time** 30 to 40 minutes

**Train** Services run at least twice per hour from Amsterdam (€6.40, 40 minutes); the canal-bound centre is 500m southeast of the train station  
**Car** Take the A9 in the west of Amsterdam, which goes directly to Alkmaar





oils, meal and sawed planks. Most are open for inspection, and it's a treat to clamber about the creaking works while the mills shake in the North Sea breeze.

The other buildings have been brought here from all over the country to re-create a 17th-century community and, understandably, some of them look out of place. There is an early Albert Heijn market, a cheese maker and a popular **dog factory** that turns out wooden shoes as if grinding keys. The engaging pewter smith will explain the story behind dozens of tiny figures while the soft metal sets in the moulds. The spanking new **Zaans Museum** (☎ 075-616 28 62; adult/child €4.50/2.70; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) shows how the harnessing of wind and water was done.

Admission to the re-created community site is free, but some buildings charge a small admission. The information centre sells area maps for €1. Once you've finished poking about the village, a **tour boat** (adult/child €5/2.50, 🕒 Tue-Sun Apr-Sep) does a 45-minute spin on the Zaan River several times a day.

## AALSMEER

This town is home to the world's biggest **flower auction** (Bloemenveiling; ☎ 39 39 39; www.vba-aalsmeer.nl; Legmeerdijk 131; 🕒 7-11am Mon-Fri), the

### TRANSPORT: AALSMEER

**Direction** 22km southwest

**Travel time** 50 minutes

**Bus** Connexion bus 172 from Amsterdam Centraal Station to Aalsmeer VBA stop (four times hourly)

**Car** Take the A4 a short way to Haarlemmermeer then left (southeast) onto the N201

Bloemenveiling. Make sure you're in the viewing gallery by 9am to catch the first flower-laden carts go to auction. Selling is conducted – surprise! – by Dutch auction, with a huge clock showing the starting price. From the starting bell, the hand keeps dropping until someone takes up the offer and a deal is struck. There's a self-guided audio tour that will let you peek into the auction rooms and see arrangers prepping the blooms for display.

The auctions takes place in Europe's largest commercial complex (one million sq metres), and one look at the parking lot and truck fleets will tell you why so much space is necessary. Some 90 million flowers and two million plants change hands here every single day, racking up nearly €7 million in business. More and more transactions are taking place online, so catch the action while it's still here. Mondays are the busiest time, Thursdays the quietest.

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# TRANSPORT

Straddling one of Europe's busiest cross-roads, Amsterdam has excellent air links, a fine motorway and train lines fanning out to the rest of Europe. Once in town, you'll find that Amsterdam is very much a walking city; you can traverse the old centre in 30 minutes and reach the outskirts in an hour. The tram system is reliable, though not necessarily faster than a bike, the locals' preferred way of getting around.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

## AIR Airport

A mere 18km from central Amsterdam, Schiphol airport is the Netherlands' main international airport and the fourth-busiest passenger terminal in Europe. It's the hub of Dutch passenger carrier KLM, and over 100 airlines have direct flights and connections to all continents. Its shopping arcades, both in public areas and the See Buy Fly duty-free areas, are renowned.

### Things Change...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Meet arrivals in the large lobby known as Schiphol Plaza. For airport and flight information call ☎ 0900 01 41 (per minute €0.40) or see [www.schiphol.nl](http://www.schiphol.nl).

The airport is in the same telephone area code as Amsterdam proper (☎ 020).

Luggage may be deposited at the [left luggage office](#) (☎ 601 2443) in the basement between arrival areas One and Two. Cost is €5 per item per day. Lockers are available from €5 to €9 per day (depending on size) and luggage can be stored for up to a week.

## GETTING INTO TOWN

The Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS; national railway) runs trains to Centraal Station (one way/return €3.60/5.50, 15 to 20 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes) from right beneath Schiphol Plaza. Train-ticket counters and vending machines are in Schiphol Plaza's central court; buy your ticket before taking the escalator down to the platforms (see [p242](#) for instructions for domestic tickets). If you need a *strippenkaart* (a ticket for local transport within Amsterdam), purchase it at the Ako newsstand near the ticket windows.

Taxi services between Amsterdam and Schiphol airport take 20 to 45 minutes (may be longer in rush hour) and cost about €30 to €40. Aficionados swear by [Amsterdam Airport Business Taxi](#) (☎ 06 5376 9753; [www.aabt.info](http://www.aabt.info)), who have Mercedes cars and professional drivers and cost €34 to €42 depending on your destination or origin in town.

Some of the international hotel chains have free shuttle services for their guests. Public services such as Connexion bus Interliner 370 also run regular services to and from central Amsterdam. Connexion runs a paid hotel shuttle (one way/return around €12.50/19.50). When making your hotel reservation, ask whether the shuttle stops on the route.

Another way to get to or from the airport is by the minivan service [Schiphol Travel Taxi](#) (☎ 0900 88 76, per min €0.10, from outside the Netherlands 31 38 339 47 68; [www.schiphol.nl](http://www.schiphol.nl)). Figure on about €21 per person.

By car, take the A4 freeway to/from the A10 ring road around Amsterdam. A short stretch of A9 connects to the A4 close to Schiphol.

Car-rental offices at the airport are in the right-hand corner near the central exits of Schiphol Plaza.

The airport's P1 and P2 short-term (undercover) parking garages charge €1.90 per half-hour for the first three hours, then €3 per hour. Daily charges are €26 a day for the first three days, €17.50 a day thereafter. The long-term (open-air) parking area is a fair distance from the terminal but is linked by a 24-hour shuttle bus. The charge is €50 for up to three days and €6.50 for each day thereafter.

## BICYCLE & SCOOTER

The vast majority of Amsterdammers get around town on their estimated 600,000 *fiet-sen* (bikes). Motor scooters and mopeds are popular too, but few places hire them out (see right). Helmets are not required.

Many visitors rent a bike towards the end of their stay and wish they had done so sooner. See the boxed text, below, before setting out.

### Bicycle Hire

All the companies listed here require ID plus a credit card imprint or a cash deposit with a passport. Many rental agencies require that you bring your passport as proof of ID. Prices are for basic 'coaster-brake' bikes; gears and handbrakes, and especially insurance, usually cost more.

**Bike City** (Map p86; ☎ 626 37 21; www.bikecity.nl; Bloemgracht 68-70; per day/week €8.50/41, plus credit card imprint deposit) There's no advertising on the bikes, so you can pretend you're a local.

**Damstraat Rent-a-Bike** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 625 50 29; www.bikes.nl; Damstraat 20-2; per day/week €7/31, plus credit card imprint deposit)

**Holland Rent-a-Bike** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 32 07; Damrak 247; per day/week €6.40/34.50, plus deposit €150 or credit card imprint)

**MacBike** (☎ 620 09 85; www.macbike.nl; per day/week €8.50/29.75, plus ID & €50 deposit or credit card imprint) Centraal Station (Map pp62-5); Visserplein (Map pp62-5); Mr Visserplein 2; Weteringschans (Map pp100-1; Weteringschans 2) The most expensive (and the bikes are equipped with big signs that say 'LOOK OUT!' to locals), but it has the most locations.

**Mike's Bike Tours** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 622 79 70; www.mikesbiketours.com; Kerkstraat 134; half-day/full day/ additional day €5/7/5, plus €200 deposit or passport or other ID)

## BICYCLE RULES

The heavy traffic can be intimidating, but observe a few basics and soon you'll be freewheeling like a native:

- Cyclists have the right of way, except when vehicles are entering from the right. However, that doesn't mean motorists are as careful as they should be.
- Watch for pedestrians too. Tourists (the poor things) tend to wander in and out of bike paths with no idea of the danger they're putting themselves in.
- By law, after dusk you need to use the lights on your bike (front and rear) and have reflectors on both wheels. If your bike does not have lights, you need to use clip-on lights, both front and rear.
- It's polite to give a quick ring of your bell as a warning. If someone's about to hit you, a good sharp yell is highly effective.
- Chain your bike securely. Most bikes come with two locks, one for the front wheel (attach it to the frame) and the other for the back. One lock should also be attached to something stationary.

To carry a bike aboard a train, you'll need to purchase a bike day pass (€6), valid throughout the country, and carriage is subject to availability of space. Many train stations also have bike rental facilities on the spot. Collapsible bikes can be carried for free. An alternative to renting a bike is to buy one. Figure on about €80 for a used bike and maybe €40 for two good locks.

### Scooter Hire

The best bet for scooter hire is to try **Moped Rental Service Gillex** (Map p86; ☎ 623 45 50; www.gillex.nl; Marnixstraat 208; weekday/weekend day €37.50/42.50, weekend/week €80/210, plus deposit €450). Scooters come in all colours, as long as it's yellow.

## BOAT

### Canal Boat, Bus & Bike

**Canal Bus** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 623 98 86; www.canal.nl; day pass per adult/child €18/12) does several circuits between Centraal Station and the Rijksmuseum between 9.50am and 8pm. The day pass is valid until noon the next day. The same company rents canal bikes (pedal boats) for €8 per person per hour (€7 if more than two people per canal bike). Docks are by Leidseplein (Map pp100-1) and near the Anne Frank Huis (Map p92).

See p249 for details of canal boat tours.

### Ferries

There are free ferries from behind Centraal Station to destinations along the IJ, notably Amsterdam Noord.

The ferry that goes to the Eastern Docklands costs €1.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

We absolutely don't recommend having a car in Amsterdam, but if you must, read on.

### Driving

Visitors are entitled to drive in the Netherlands on their foreign licences for a period of up to 185 days per calendar year. If you stay longer, you must get a Dutch licence (with some exceptions). For all queries, ring the **National Transport Authority** (☎ 0900 07 39, per min €0.10).

Traffic in Amsterdam travels on the right and is generally quite busy. The minimum driving age is 18 years for cars and 16 years for motorcycles. Seat belts are required for everyone in a vehicle. Children under 12 must ride in the back if there's room.

Be alert for bicycles, and if you are trying to turn right, be aware that bikes have priority. Trams always have the right of way. In traffic circles (roundabouts), approaching vehicles technically have right of way, but in practice they yield to vehicles already on the circle.

The blood-alcohol limit when driving is 0.05%, and the speed limits are 50km/h in built-up areas, 80km/h in the country, 100km/h on major rural through-roads and 120km/h on freeways (sometimes this is reduced to 100km/h, but this is generally clearly indicated).

### Hire

Local companies are usually cheaper than the big multinationals, but don't offer as much backup or flexibility. Rates start at around €34/40 per day for a two-/four-person car, but they do change frequently, so call around. Rentals at Schiphol airport incur a €40 surcharge.

Look for local car-rental firms in telephone directories under the heading *Autoverhuur*. Following is a list of some of the better-known car-rental companies:

**Avis Autoverhuur** (Map p116; ☎ 683 60 61; www.avis.nl; Nassaukade 380)

**easyCar** (www.easycar.nl)

**Europcar** (Map p116; ☎ 683 21 23; www.europcar.nl; Overtoom 197)

**Hertz** (Map p116; ☎ 612 24 41; www.hertz.nl; Overtoom 333)

**National Car Rental** (Map p116; ☎ 616 24 66; www.nationalcar-rental.com; Overtoom 184)

**Sixt** (☎ 023-405 90 90; www.e-sixt.nl; Schiphol Plaza)

### Parking

Parking in the city hits you where it hurts. Pay-and-display applies in the central zone from 9am to midnight from Monday to Saturday, and noon to midnight on Sunday. At the time of writing, the cost was €4.60/27.60/18.40 per hour/day/evening in most of the City Centre, and €3.60/21.60/14.40 elsewhere within



the Canal Belt. Prices ease as you move away from the centre. Day passes are available.

Nonpayers in the City Centre will find a bright yellow *wielklem* (wheel clamp) attached to their car and have to pay €103.60 to get it removed; visit the closest [Stadtoezicht office](#) (City Surveillance; ☎ 553 03 00) to pay the fine. Otherwise, within 24 hours the vehicle will be towed and the fine skyrockets to €300.

Parking garages in the City Centre include locations at Damrak, near Leidseplein and under Museumplein and the Stopera, but they're often full and cost more than a parking permit. Here are some other options for parking:

**Amsterdam-Noord** Park for free and take the ferry across.

**Car Hotel** (☎ 493 12 78; www.carhotel.nl; per 24hr €20) Collects and delivers your car from and to your hotel.

**Stadionplein** Park and ride in from the southwestern outskirts.

**Transferium parking garage** (☎ 400 17 21; Bijlmer; per day incl 2 return tickets for public transport to Centraal Station €5.50) Under the Amsterdam Arena.

## TAXI

Amsterdam taxis are among Europe's most expensive. Worse, drivers tend not to know the streets; you often have to tell them how to get there. This is complicated because, as a group, taxi drivers are among the few people you meet in town who may not speak English well. A notable exception is [Taxicentrale Amsterdam](#) (TCA; ☎ 777 7777).

You're not supposed to hail taxis in the many no-stop zones of the city, but many cabs will halt if you do. You can also usually find them at taxi stands at hotels and, especially at night, on Leidseplein.

Flag fall is around €3.40 and the rate is €1.94 per kilometre, plus a 5% to 10% tip. Some independent cabs charge lower fares but many will charge more. There's also the informal strategy of setting a price with the driver before you get in – figure about two thirds of the metered price. Some haggling is usually involved. If a driver's been waiting long enough, he may agree.

A cute alternative to regular taxis, the open three-wheeled scooters of [TukTuk](#) (☎ 0900 993 33 99, per min €0.55) have a Fellini quality about them. Costs are zone-based: €3.50/5/6.50 for one/two/three passengers in the City Centre, plus a flat €3.50 per zone thereafter.

## TRAIN

Trains are frequent and serve domestic destinations at regular intervals, sometimes five or six times an hour. However, the network has been plagued by poor punctuality in recent years, particularly at rush hour.

Amsterdam's main train station is Centraal Station (CS). There's a left-luggage desk downstairs from Track 2, near the southeastern corner of the station.

## Domestic Tickets

Tickets can be bought at the window or ticketing machines. Buying a ticket on board means you'll pay almost double the normal fare.

To use the ticketing machines, find your destination on the alphabetical list of place names, enter the code into the machine, then choose 1st or 2nd class (there's little difference in comfort, but if the train is crowded there are usually more seats in 1st class). Then choose with/without discount, the former *only* if you have a Railrunner or Voordeel-Urenkaart (see below) and the period of validity, ie 'today' or 'without date' for a future trip. For tickets without date, be sure to validate the ticket in a yellow punch gadget near the platform before you board. The machines take coins and PIN cards, but not credit cards.

With a valid ticket you can break your journey along the direct route. Day return tickets are 10% to 15% cheaper than two one-ways.

Children under four travel free if they don't take up a seat. Ages four to 11 pay a 'Railrunner' fare of €2 as long as an adult comes along.

If you plan to do a lot of travelling, a one-day travel card costs €40.30. For longer stays, the €55 Voordeel-Urenkaart is valid for one year and gives a 40% discount on train travel weekdays after 9am, as well as weekends, public holidays and the whole months of July and August. The discount also applies to up to three people travelling with you on the same trip. Seniors (60-plus) can pay an extra €14 for seven days of fare-free travel a year.

## International Tickets

For details of international trains and reservations, visit the [NS international office](#) (www.ns.nl; Centraal Station; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) facing Track 2 and see Dutch inefficiency at its worst. At peak times (eg summer) the queues can be up to two hours.

Upon entering, pick up a numbered ticket based on the kind of train ticket you need: advance, pick-up of a reservation, or departing within an hour. Pick-ups and immediate departures get higher priority. Don't even think of taking a number for other than what you're planning to buy – you'll be sent to the back of the queue.

You may also purchase tickets by phone (☎ 0900 92 96, per minute €0.35, 8am to midnight), or by credit card online, but you must pick them up here. Be sure to reserve international seats in advance during peak periods.

## Schedules

In stations, schedules are posted by route, though trip duration and arrival time information aren't. Outside of the station, contact the [NS](#) (☎ 0900 92 92, per min €0.70; www.ns.nl; ☎ 7am-midnight).

## TRAM, BUS & METRO

Most public transport within the city is by tram; buses and Amsterdam's metro (subway) serve some outer reaches. Services are run by the local transit authority, the GVB; national railway (NS) tickets are not valid on local transport.

The GVB has an [information office](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 0900 80 11, per min €0.10; www.gvb.nl; Stationsplein 10; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat & Sun) across the tram tracks from the Centraal Station main entrance. Here you can get tickets, maps and the like. The website has lots of useful information including details of how to reach key sights.

You must either purchase a ticket on board or validate it when you board. If you get caught without a ticket or properly stamped strip, playing the ignorant foreigner will guarantee that you get fined €37.50. Some trams have conductors responsible for ticketing (usually towards the rear of the tram), while others do not. Drivers can also handle tickets but prefer not to as it slows things down. If you are transferring from another line, show your ticket to the conductor or driver as you board. Buses are more conventional, with drivers stamping the tickets as you board.

Chances are you won't use the metro unless you go to the international bus station at Amstelstation, south to the RAI Convention Centre, or to the World Trade Centre (all [Map pp58-9](#)).

## GVB Fares

Tickets on trams and buses are calculated by zone and are valid for one hour from the time they're stamped. Within the city centre you are in Zone 1. When in doubt, consult the maps at bus and tram stops, or ask the driver or conductor. Single-trip fares for one/two zones are €1.60/2.40.

GVB passes are valid in all zones, and fares for one/two/three days are €6.50/10.50/13.50. Children (aged four to 11) and seniors can obtain a day pass for €4.50 per day, but multiple day passes are not available.

## Strippenkaart

Depending on how much you plan to travel, consider a *strippenkaart* ('strip card'; 15-/45-strip cards €6.80/20.10), available at train and bus stations, post offices, many VVV (tourist information) offices, supermarkets and tobacconists.

Each strip is numbered, but there's a trick: you need to stamp for the number of zones you're travelling *plus one*, and you stamp one strip only. In other words, if you're travelling in Zone 1, stamp the second available strip but not the first (this would invalidate the second stamp). You should begin stamping from the lowest number available. You can also use a strip card if you're travelling with a companion, so if both of you are travelling within Zone 1, you stamp the second and the fourth strips (two strips plus two strips).

If you're boarding transport with a conductor, simply state where you're travelling and the conductor will stamp your card for you. If you need to validate it yourself, fold the card so that the strip you want to stamp is first on the top, and insert it into the machine.

A *strippenkaart* is valid on local public transport throughout the country; however, in early 2009 they will be replaced by a smart-card system, the *OV-chipkaart*. A disposable card costs €8 for four journeys – not a great deal. Or you can pay a one-off fee of €7.50 for a regular *OV-chipkaart* and load it at the GVB ticket vendors and machines (good for longer stays, as single journeys begin at €0.90). Don't forget to swipe it at the card readers in trams and buses, both upon entering and exiting, or you'll be liable for a fine.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours are similar to those of other European countries, with a few exceptions. Most banks and businesses close on public holidays, but many shops open on Good Friday, Christmas and Boxing Day. On other religious days, such as Whit Monday, it may seem hardly like a holiday at all. Venues normally closed on Sunday are likely to be shut on public holidays.

**Banks** Open from 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday – some till 9pm Thursday, and Saturday mornings.

**Cafés** Open 10am to 1am Sunday to Thursday, till 3am Friday and Saturday.

**General office hours** From 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

**Museums** Often closed on Monday.

**Pubs and clubs** Opening hours vary. Closing hours 1am Sunday to Thursday, 3am Friday and Saturday.

**Restaurants** Lunch 11am to 2.30pm, dinner 6pm to 10pm.

**Shops** Open from noon to 6pm Monday, 9am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday. *Koopavond* (evening shopping) is on Thursday nights, with shops staying open until 9pm. Within the Canal Belt, shops are allowed to open from 1pm until 5pm on Sunday, although not all choose to do so.

**Supermarkets** Open until 8pm.

## CHILDREN

There is much to keep kids occupied in Amsterdam – a zoo, playgrounds and parks, canal boat trips, a marionette theatre and kid-friendly museums, just for starters (see the boxed text, p105). Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* is a goldmine for planning ahead.

In general, attitudes towards children in the Netherlands are very positive, apart from some hotels with a no-children policy – check when you book. Most restaurants have high chairs and children's menus. Facilities for changing nappies, however, are limited to the big department stores, major museums and train stations and you'll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is generally OK in public if done discreetly. Kids are allowed in pubs but aren't supposed to drink until they're 16. While they're still tots, be careful of all the open water (Dutch kids all learn to swim at school).

See also listings in the Neighbourhoods chapter (p56), or check local listings for special events (under *jeugd* for 'youth').

## Babysitting

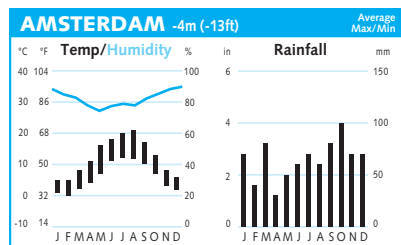
Babysitters charge between €5 and €6 an hour depending on the time of day, sometimes with weekend and/or hotel supplements and a service fee for the agency, and you might have to pay for their taxi home if it gets late. Agencies use male and female students, but you may not always be able to specify which gender. Weekends frequently get booked out, so plan ahead. Ask at hotels about babysitting services, or try **Oppascentrale Kriterion** (Map p122; ☎ 624 58 48; www.kriterionoppas.org; Valckenierstraat 45hs; ☎ 4.30-8pm daily, 9-11am Mon).

## CLIMATE

Unlike the climate suggested by 17th-century landscapes depicting half-frozen skaters, Amsterdam has a temperate maritime climate with cool winters and mild summers. The best time to go is May (when the tulips are out) to August, when the weather is most reliable, but an Indian summer during September and early October can be delightful.

Rain is spread evenly over the year, often in the form of endless drizzle, though the statisticians tell us that most of it falls at night (yeah, right). It's best to bring a foul-weather jacket in case of the occasional cold snap or rainstorm. Very few hotels have air conditioning, although higher temperatures due to global warming is slowly forcing a change. December to February is the coldest period, with occasional slushy snow and temperatures around freezing. It rarely freezes hard enough to allow skating on the canals, but when it does, the city comes alive with skaters. And you couldn't wish for better photo material than Amsterdam after a dusting of snow.

See also p16 to help you decide on the best time to go.



## COURSES

Here are some options if you're interested in studying the Dutch language in all its guttural glory:

**Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University** (Map p92; ☎ 620 02 25; www.amsu.edu; Keizersgracht 324) Based in the Felix Meritis Building.

**British Language Training Centre** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 36 34; www.bltc.nl; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 328e) Offers Dutch and English courses and has a good reputation.

**Tropeninstituut** (Map p129; ☎ 568 83 19; www.kit.nl; Royal Institute for the Tropics, Language Training Department, Lineausstraat 2) Intensive language courses with a large component of cultural training, aimed specifically at foreigners moving to the Netherlands.

**Volksuniversiteit Amsterdam** (☎ 626 16 26; www.volksuniversiteitamsterdam.nl; Rapenburgerstraat 73) Well-regarded day and evening courses that don't cost a fortune.

## CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

For visitors from EU countries, limits only still apply for perfumes and other luxury products. Special limits apply to visitors from the new EU member states who joined after 2003; see www.douane.nl for details.

Residents of non-EU countries are limited to the following:

**Coffee** 500g of coffee, or 200g of coffee extracts or coffee essences.

**Perfume** 50g of perfume and 0.25L of eau de toilette.

**Tea** 100g of tea, or 40g of tea extracts or tea essences.

**Tobacco** 200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco (shag or pipe tobacco) or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars.

**Wine** 1L of strong alcoholic drink or 2L of sparkling wine or fortified wine such as sherry or port; 2L of nonsparkling wine.

## DISCOUNT CARDS

Visitors of various professions – artists, journalists, museum conservators, students and teachers – may get discounts at some venues if they show accreditation. Seniors over 65, and with partners of 60 or older, benefit from reductions on public transport, museum admissions, concerts and more. You may look younger, so bring your passport.

Other discount options:

**Cultureel Jongeren Paspoort** (Cultural Youth Passport; www.cjpn.nl; €15) Big discounts to museums and cultural events nationwide for people under 27 years.

**I Amsterdam Card** (per 24/36/72hr €33/43/53) Available at VVV offices and some hotels. Provides admission to most museums, canal boat trips, and discounts and freebies at shops, attractions and restaurants. Also includes a GVB transit pass.

**Museumkaart** (Museum Card; over/under 26yr €30/15, plus €4.95 for first-time registrants) Free entry to some 400 museums all over the country for one year. Buy one at the ticket counter before you hit an exhibition.

## ELECTRICITY

The standard voltage throughout the Netherlands is 220V, 50Hz. Plugs are of the Continental two-round-pin variety. If you need an adapter, get it before you leave home because most of the ones available in the Netherlands are for locals going abroad. See www.kropla.com for issues related to electrical systems, such as cycle frequencies and how to avoid frying your hairdryer.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Amsterdam is the country's capital but confusingly, Den Haag is the seat of government, the result of an old deal among Holland's ruling elite. So the embassies are in Den Haag, but Amsterdam has a raft of consulates:

**France** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 530 69 69; Vijzelgracht 2)

**Germany** (Map p110; ☎ 574 77 00; Honthorststraat 36-8)

**Italy** (Map p110; ☎ 550 20 50; Vijzelstraat 79)

**Spain** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 620 38 11; Frederiksplein 34)

**UK** (Map p116; ☎ 676 43 43; Koningslaan 44)

**USA** (Map p110; ☎ 575 53 09; Museumplein 19)

These countries have embassies in Den Haag:

**Australia** (☎ 070-310 82 00; Carnegiealaan 4)

**Canada** (☎ 070-311 16 00; Sophialaan 7)

**Denmark** (☎ 070-302 59 59; Koninginnegracht 30)

**India** (☎ 070-346 97 71; Buitenrustweg 2)

**Ireland** (☎ 070-363 09 93; Dr Kuyperstraat 9)

**Israel** (☎ 070-376 05 00; Buitenhof 47)

**Japan** (☎ 070-346 95 44; Tobias Asserlaan 2)

**New Zealand** (☎ 070-346 93 24; Eisenhowerlaan 77n)

**Norway** (☎ 070-311 76 11; Lange Vijverberg 11)

## EMERGENCY

In a life-threatening emergency, the national telephone number for an ambulance, police and fire brigade is ☎ 112. It's an all-in service that feeds you into the right emergency service, with no waiting.

## HEALTH

For information on medical services in Amsterdam, see [opposite](#); some information for women is on [p256](#).

## STDs & HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is still a problem in the Netherlands, but has been contained by practical education campaigns and free needle-exchange programs. The Dutch health ministry and organisations such as the COC, HIV Vereniging and Schorer Foundation (listed following) do their bit to prevent the spread of STDs and HIV. Virtually all bars, bookshops and saunas that cater for gays provide safe-sex leaflets; many also sell condoms.

Free testing for sexually transmitted diseases is available at the [GG&GD STD Clinic](#) (Municipal Medical & Health Service; [Map p122](#); ☎ 555 58 22; www.ggd.amsterdam.nl; Weesperplein 1; ☎ 8.30-10.30am & 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Fri). You must arrive early in the morning for same-day testing. If a problem is diagnosed staff will provide free treatment immediately, but blood-test results take a week (they'll give you the results over the phone if need be). The HIV Vereniging offers HIV testing on Friday nights (€20; ring for an appointment), with results in 15 minutes.

There are bilingual telephone help lines for those seeking information or a friendly ear:

[HIV Vereniging](#) ([Map p116](#); ☎ 616 01 60, help line 689 25 77; www.hivnet.org; 1e Helmersstraat 17b-3; ☎ 2-10pm Mon-Fri) National organisation for the HIV positive; provides personal assistance.

[Schorer Foundation](#) ([Map pp100-1](#); ☎ 573 94 44; www.schorer.nl; Sarphatistraat 35; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) NGO offering lesbian and gay health-care services; HIV prevention, buddy care.

## HOLIDAYS

### Public Holidays

People take public holidays seriously, and if your Dutch visit collides with one, your plans may face a hiccup. Most museums adopt Sunday hours on the days listed here (except Christmas and New Year, when they are closed) even if they fall on a day when the place would otherwise be closed.

[Nieuwjaarsdag](#) New Year's Day, 1 January. Parties and fireworks galore.

[Pasen](#) (Easter) Goede Vrijdag (Good Friday); [Eerste and Tweede Paasdag](#) (Easter Sunday and Easter Monday).

[Koninginnedag](#) Queen's Day, 30 April.

[Bevrijdingsdag](#) Liberation Day, 5 May. This isn't a universal holiday; government workers have the day off but almost everyone else has to work.

[Hemelvaartsdag](#) Ascension Day. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

[Eerste and Tweede Pinksterdag](#) Whit Sunday (Pentecost) and Whit Monday. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

[Eerste and Tweede Kerstdag](#) Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Many people also treat [Remembrance Day](#) (4 May) as a day off.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Amsterdam led the digital revolution in Europe, so the city is just as wired as many of its visitors.

Most hotels offer some kind of internet access, from business centres and turbo-charged wi-fi to the receptionist's dusty PC. Oftentimes you can borrow a guest laptop. In-room connections may be ISDN or modular, if there's no wi-fi; if this is important, check ahead with the hotel.

There are a few internet cafés around town, but they're a dying breed with more and more visitors logging in via hotel terminals or mobile devices. Costs are roughly €1.50 to €2 per hour, with snappy high-speed lines.

[easyInternetcafé](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); www.easyeverything.co.uk; Damrak 33; ☎ 9am-10pm) Rows of aging self-service screens from the makers of easyJet.

[goPengo](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); www.gopengo.org; ☎ 771 97 58; Staalstraat 28; ☎ 9am-midnight) Linux-loving nonprofit outfit and defender of open-source software.

[Internet City](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 620 12 92; Nieuwendijk 76; ☎ 9am-midnight) Over 100 terminals not far from the main coffeeshop drag. Draws backpackers and bleary-eyed party animals.

Many coffeeshops double as internet cafés. You can also surf the web for free at outlets of the public library (Openbare Bibliotheek); try the following:

[Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 523 09 00; Oosterdokskade 143; ☎ 10am-10pm) Free wi-fi and use of library terminals, in a stunning new edifice overlooking the city and harbour (see [p71](#)).

[Openbare Bibliotheek Roelof Hartplein](#) ([Map p110](#); ☎ 662 00 94; Roelof Hartplein 430; ☎ 2-8pm Mon & Wed, 10am-5pm Tue & Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Housed in a fine Amsterdam School building.

## LEGAL MATTERS

The Amsterdam *politie* (police) are pretty relaxed and helpful unless you do something instinctively wrong such as chucking litter or smoking a joint right under their noses. They can hold offenders for up to six hours for questioning (plus another six hours if they can't establish your identity, or 24 hours if they consider the matter serious) and do not have to grant a phone call, though they'll ring your consulate. You're presumed innocent until proven guilty.

In principle there's a 'limited' requirement for anyone over 12 years of age to carry ID. For the visitor this basically means on public transport, at soccer games or, increasingly, in designated 'security-sensitive' areas such as Rembrandtplein or the Red Light District, where the police can conduct random checks for illegal weapons and drugs. (It's all part of a national law-and-order, anti-terrorism campaign, but most visitors won't even notice it.) Foreigners should carry a passport or a photocopy of the relevant data pages; a driver's licence isn't sufficient.

You can drink beer and wine from age 16, and spirits from age 18, although bars and cafés are pretty lenient when it comes to proof of age. Coffeeshops require visitors be 18 or even 21 to enter and consume soft drugs. The legal driving age is 18.

## MAPS

The maps in this book will probably suffice for casual touring. Lonely Planet's handy *Amsterdam City Map* is plastic-coated against the elements, and has a street index that covers the most popular parts of the city.

Otherwise you'll find a wide variety of maps for sale at any VVV office, as well as at bookstores and newsstands.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

The Netherlands has reciprocal health arrangements with other EU countries and Australia. If you're an EU citizen, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), available from health centres or, in the UK, post offices, covers you for most medical care. You still might have to pay on the spot but you'll be able to claim it back again at home. Citizens of other countries are advised to take out travel insurance; medical or dental treatment is less expensive than in North America but still costs enough.

There are no compulsory vaccinations, but if you've just travelled through a yellow-fever area you could be asked for proof that you're covered. Up-to-date tetanus, polio and diphtheria immunisations are always recommended whether you're travelling or not.

For minor health concerns, see a local *drogist* (chemist) or *apotheek* (pharmacy, to fill prescriptions). For more serious problems, go to the casualty ward of a *ziekenhuis* (hospital) or try the [Centrale Doktersdienst](#) (☎ 0900 592 34 34), the 24-hour central medical service that will refer you to an appropriate doctor, dentist or pharmacy. For matters dealing with STDs and HIV/AIDS, see [opposite](#).

Forget about buying flu tablets and antacids at supermarkets; for anything stronger than toothpaste you'll have to go to a pharmacy. A convenient one is [Dam Apotheek](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 624 43 31; Damstraat 2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat), just off the Dam.

A number of hospitals have 24-hour emergency facilities:

[Boven-IJ Ziekenhuis](#) (☎ 634 63 46; Statenjachtstraat 1, Amsterdam Noord) Take bus 34 north from Centraal Station.

[Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis](#) ([Map p129](#); ☎ 599 91 11; 1e Oosterparkstraat 1) At Oosterpark near the Tropenmuseum. The closest public hospital to the centre of town.

[St Lucas Andreas Ziekenhuis](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 510 89 11; Jan Tooropstraat 164) In the western suburbs.

[Slotervaart Ziekenhuis](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 512 93 33; Louwesweg 6) In the southwestern suburbs.

[VU Medisch Centrum](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 444 44 44; De Boelelaan 1117, Amsterdam Buitenveldert) Hospital of the VU (Vrije Universiteit; Free University).

## MONEY

The Netherlands uses the euro (€). If you're coming with US dollars you'll be aware that the euro has appreciated sharply against the dollar in the past couple of years. As for the denominations of the currency, there are €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500 notes, and €0.01, €0.02, €0.05, €0.10, €0.20, €0.50, €1 and €2 coins (amounts under €1 are called cents). Euro notes are the same in all participating countries: coins have a 'European' side and a 'national' side (in the Netherlands, with an image of Queen Beatrix). All are legal tender throughout the euro zone area, although many businesses will not accept notes larger than €50 because of the funny money in circulation.



To check the latest exchange rates, visit [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com). See also [Costs & Money](#) (p20).

## ATMs

Automatic teller machines can be found outside most banks, at the airport and at Centraal Station. Most accept credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard/Eurocard, as well as cash cards that access the Cirrus and Plus networks. Check with your home bank for service charges before leaving. ATMs (cash-points) are so widespread in Amsterdam that we haven't mapped them, except for one location in the popular Jordaan district where ATMs are thin on the ground.

## Changing Money

Avoid the private exchange booths dotted around tourist areas. They're convenient and open late, but rates and commissions tend to be lousy. Banks and the Postbank (at post offices) stick to official exchange rates and charge a sensible commission, as does [GWK Traveler](#) (☎ 0900 05 66), accessible at a number of branches: [Centraal Station](#) (🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun); [Damrak](#) (Map pp62-5; Damrak 1-5; 🕒 9am-8.45pm); [Leidseplein](#) (Map pp100-1; Leidseplein 31a; 🕒 9.15am-5.45pm) and [Schiphol airport](#) (🕒 7am-10pm).

## Credit Cards

All the major international cards are recognised, and most hotels, restaurants and major stores accept them – but always check first to avoid disappointment. Some establishments levy a 5% surcharge (or more) on credit cards to offset the commissions charged by card providers.

To withdraw money at a bank counter instead of through an ATM, go to a GWK Traveler branch such as at Centraal Station or Schiphol airport. You'll need to show your passport.

Report lost or stolen cards to the appropriate 24-hour number. For American Express and Visa, phoning the emergency contact number for your home country will speed things up.

[American Express](#) (☎ 504 86 66)

[Diners Club](#) (☎ 654 55 11)

[Eurocard](#) and [MasterCard](#) (☎ Utrecht 030-283 55 55)

[Visa](#) (☎ 660 06 11, 0800 022 31 10)

## PIN Cards

While in Amsterdam you'll notice people gleefully using 'PIN' cards everywhere, from shops to public telephones and cigarette vending machines. These direct-debit cards look like credit or bank cards with little gold-printed circuit chips on them, but they won't be of much use to visitors without a Dutch bank account. The Maestro direct-debit cards popular in Europe work just fine at ATMs.

## Travellers Cheques

Banks charge a commission of 2% to 3% to cash travellers cheques, and require passport ID. American Express and Thomas Cook are the leading providers. However, shops, restaurants and hotels always prefer cash; a few might accept travellers cheques but the rates will be anybody's guess. Direct ATM withdrawals via a credit card might make more sense for cost and convenience – check with your bank.

Eurocheques are on their way out, although you can still cash them at banks and GWKs with a guarantee card. Few shops accept them.

## NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Based in Amsterdam, *De Telegraaf* is the Netherlands' biggest newspaper: an untidy, right-wing daily with sensationalist news, good finance coverage, the closest thing you'll find to a Dutch tabloid. Amsterdammers swear by *Het Parool* for its lowdown on the capital's culture and politics. The highly regarded *NRC Handelsblad*, a merger of two elitist papers from Rotterdam and Amsterdam, sets the country's journalistic standards, while the populist *Volkskrant* has leftist leanings. The *Financieële Dagblad* is the country's leading daily for financial and business news. You'll occasionally see the *Algemene Dagblad*, a middle-of-the-road paper that has lost ground to its competitors. Many commuters pick up copies of the free *Metro*, *Spits* or *Dag* from racks in the train stations; leaf through and leave them on a seat for the next guy.

The English-language *Amsterdam Weekly* ([www.amsterdamweekly.nl](http://www.amsterdamweekly.nl)) comes out each Thursday with useful cultural features and listings. English-speakers can easily find European editions of the *Economist*, *Newsweek* and *Time*, as well as most of the major international newspapers at book stores such as Atheneum (p137). The main British newspapers

are available (the same day), as is the *International Herald Tribune*.

English-language ezines with widespread following include *Expatica* ([www.expatica.com](http://www.expatica.com)), which is tailored to the European expat set, and *Dutch News* ([www.dutchnews.nl](http://www.dutchnews.nl)), a summary of daily happenings with a great news archive.

## ORGANISED TOURS

For those with limited time on their hands, a quick tour is not such a bad thing – it lets you see a whole lot of stuff in a short period so you can then decide where you'd like to spend more time. There's a tour to suit every taste in Amsterdam, ranging from bike rides to walking tours. Canal cruises are by far the most popular and are an absolute must. While some are themed (jazz, candlelight, pizza – you name it, they got it), some are simply practical, enabling you to link many sights in a short time in the nicest way possible.

## Bike Tours

[Cycletours Holland](#) (Map pp58-9; ☎ 627 90 32; [www.cycletours.com](http://www.cycletours.com); Buiksloterweg 7a) This very experienced tour company offers a variety of longer tours (one week+) around the Netherlands by bicycle with accommodation in barge-boats for groups of 15 to 30 people. It caters mostly to people who book in advance from abroad, so contact them well in advance (at least several weeks). A one-week tour starts around €600 for cabin with shared facilities, plus a €60 supplement in high season.

[Mike's Bike Tours](#) (Map pp100-1; ☎ 622 79 70; [www.mikesbikeamsterdam.com](http://www.mikesbikeamsterdam.com); Kerkstraat 134; adult/infant in bike seat/child 12yr & under/student bike tour incl bike rental €22/free/15/19, bike & boat tour €29/free/20/25; 🕒 bike tour 12.30pm Mar–mid-May & Sep–Nov, 11am & 4pm mid-May–Aug, bike & boat tour noon Tue–Sun Jun–Aug) These fantastic four-hour tours take you both around the centre of town and into the countryside, with stops at windmills and cheese farms. Guides have insider knowledge of the city, and tours often end with a pub visit. The 'bike and boat' tour (about five hours) includes drinks on board and a visit to the Vondelpark. The meeting place for all tours is the reflecting pool on Museumplein, right behind the Rijksmuseum.

[Yellow Bike Tours](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 620 69 40; [www.yellowbike.nl](http://www.yellowbike.nl); Nieuwezijds Kolk 29; city/countryside tour per person €19.50/27.50; 🕒 city tour 9.30am & 1pm Sun–Fri, 9.30am & 2pm Sat, countryside tour 11am, all tours Apr–1 Nov) Yellow Bike offered the original Amsterdam bike tour, so it's got it down pat. Choose from a three-hour city tour or a six-hour countryside tour through the pretty

Waterland district north of central Amsterdam. These tours are less youth-oriented than Mike's and are limited to 12 to 15 tour participants per guide. Tours depart from its office. Reservations recommended.

## Boat Tours

The companies mentioned here offer a variety of boat tours (singular *rondvaart*, plural *rondvaarten*), from hour-long excursions on the inner canals (figure on around €9 per person) to more elaborate tours of architecture on the Eastern Docklands, jazz cruises, dinner cruises and candlelight cruises. Sure they're touristy but on a clear night with the city lights a-twinkling, who's to argue it's not delightful? Details are constantly being revised, so check websites or phone for details. Some cruises are included in the I Amsterdam Card (p245).

To hire a paddle-powered Canal Bike, see p252. For details of boat transport around town, see p240.

[Blue Boat Company](#) (☎ 679 13 70; [www.blueboat.nl](http://www.blueboat.nl); Stadhouderskade 30; 75min canal cruises adult/child under 4yr/child 5-12yr €10/free/6; 🕒 every 30min 10am-6pm Apr–Sep, every hr 10am-5pm Oct–Mar) Blue Boat's main tour clocks in at 75 minutes. Evening cruises (€14.50/free/10) are offered three times a night from April to September, and at 8pm only Thursday to Sunday the rest of the year. Tour boats depart from the Blue Boat dock near the Rijksmuseum.

[Canal Bus](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 623 98 86; [www.canal.nl](http://www.canal.nl); Weteringschans 26; day pass adult/child 5-12yr €18/12) Offers a unique hop-on, hop-off canal boat service visiting most of the big destinations. Routes vary depending on where you want to visit. At night, there is a delightful 1½-hour jazz cruise (€45, runs 8pm and 10pm Saturdays from April to November). Sip drinks, enjoy light nibbles and watch the city lights go by.

[Classic Boat Dinners](#) (Map p92; ☎ 330 19 10; [www.classicboatdinner.nl](http://www.classicboatdinner.nl); Prinsengracht 391; €214 1st hr, then €195 per hr) Nothing is more romantic than dining on this beautifully restored river launch, *Klejn Amsterdam* (1905), as you cruise the quieter canals, personal waiter on hand, feasting on a gastronomic silver-service six-course meal and marvellous wines. Propose during dessert and a yes is guaranteed. Also good for showing the boss around town.

[Classic Canal Charters](#) (Map p122; ☎ 421 08 25; [www.classiccanalcharters.com](http://www.classiccanalcharters.com); Czaar Peterstraat 147hs; €132-316 per hr, minimum 1.5-2hr) Hires out authentic old boats (converted cargo barges, sloops and salon boats) for six to 60 passengers for cruises (dinner, entertainment, outings etc) in Amsterdam and beyond. Rental includes skipper.

**Holland International** (☎ 622 77 88; www.hir.nl; Prins Hendrikkade 33a; 1hr cruise adult/child €11/6) Its one-hour canal cruise (every 15 minutes 9am to 6pm and every 30 minutes 6pm to 10pm) is to Amsterdam what the Eiffel Tower is for Paris – experience it before you die. It also has a roster of candlelight lunch and dinner cruises (adults €27.50 to €69, children €17.50 to €45).

**Rederij Lovers** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 530 10 90; www.loversonline.nl; Prins Hendrikkade 25-27; 1hr tour per person €9, Museumboat day pass per adult/child €17/13) Apart from a one-hour canal tour (leaves every 30 or 45 minutes from the Lovers terminal in front of Centraal Station), there's a variety of night-time cruises, including the candlelight cruise (€27.50, running 8.30pm from April to October, and on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from November to March), with wine and Dutch cheese.

Don't forget that the public ferries across the IJ river take in some worthy architecture in Amsterdam-Noord and the Eastern Docklands during crossings (see p240).

## City Tours

**Keytours** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 06 23 51 51; www.keytours.nl; Damrak 19; €15-55) Keytours is your one-stop shop for city tours – on foot, bike, bus and boat – to all major sights in and around Amsterdam. While its bus tours get you to sights you wouldn't normally see, buses are not the best option in town. The tranquil two-hour candlelit cruise (€25) shows you the city at its loveliest.

**Lindbergh Tours** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 27 66; www.lindbergh.nl; Damrak 26; €7.50-69) While this outfit offers similar tours to Keytours, it also runs a city sightseeing bus tour with commentary, along with Rembrandt Tours, Red Light Tours and day trips out of Amsterdam such as the Cheese Market and Windmill tour (€30).

**New Amsterdam Tours** (☎ in Berlin 49 30 6908 8035; www.newamsterdamtours.com; tours free, donations encouraged; ☎ 11am & 3pm) An entertaining three-hour jaunt to the sights of the Medieval Centre and Red Light District by slick young guides. Meet at the Tourist Information Office (the white building) opposite Centraal Station, rain or shine.

**Randy Roy's Redlight Tours** (☎ 06 4185 3288; www.randyroysredlighttours.com; per person incl drink €12.50; ☎ 8pm Sun-Thu, 8pm & 10pm Fri & Sat) The darkest secrets of Mike Tyson, Quentin Tarantino and other celebs feature in this lively 1½-hour tour of the Red Light District, conducted by long-time Amsterdam resident Kimberley. Meet in front of the Victoria Hotel (Damarak 1-5) opposite Centraal Station.

**Red Light District Tour** (☎ 420 73 28; www.pic-amsterdam.com; Engestraat 3; €12.50; ☎ 11am Tue, Wed & Fri, 6pm Fri & Sat) The Prostitutes Information

Centre offers fascinating one-hour tours of the Red Light District where it explains the nitty-gritty of how the business works. You get to talk to a former prostitute about her work and the neighbourhood. Profits go to the centre; reservations are necessary.

**Red Light District Tour** (☎ 623 63 02; www.zoom-amsterdam.com; per person €15; ☎ 5pm) Zoom Amsterdam offers this 2½-hour tour covering both the history and culture (if you will) of the Red Light District. All questions are answered. Meet at the café inside the Schreierstoren (Prins Hendrikkade 94-95), across from Centraal Station.

**Urban Home and Garden Tours** (☎ 688 12 43, for last-minute bookings 06 2168 1918; www.uhgt.nl; per person incl drink €25; ☎ 10.15am Fri, 11.15am Sat, 12.15pm Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct) These well-regarded tours look at Amsterdam dwellings from the perspective of home, garden and even gable. Visits include 18th-century, 19th-century and contemporary homes. Tours take 2½ to three hours. You'll need to reserve ahead, and the meeting point for tours (near Rembrandtplein) will be revealed after you do.

## POST

The postal service is fairly reliable and swift with deliveries. Post offices are generally open 9am to 5pm weekdays. The **main post office** (Map p92; Singel 250; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is large and well equipped, and there's also a branch in the **Stopera complex** (Map pp62-5; Waterlooplein 10; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat). For queries about postal services ring ☎ 058-233 33 33 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday, or 9am to 4pm Saturday.

The standard rate ('priority') for letters under 20g is €0.44 within the Netherlands, €0.72 within Europe, and €0.89 outside Europe. Unless you're sending mail within the Amsterdam region, use the slot marked *Overige Postcodes* (Other Postal Codes) on the red letterboxes. When you buy stamps, you'll have to buy a booklet of at least five, so stock up on postcards.

## RADIO

Radio stations include Q-music (100.7 FM, www.qmusic.nl), Radio 538 (102.1 FM, www.radio538.nl) and Sky Radio (101.2 FM, www.skyradio.nl), plus offerings from RTL (www.rtl.nl) and NOS (Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, www.nos.nl). All have streaming and broadcast half-hourly news reports (in Dutch), with Europop and chat sandwiched in between.

BBC Radio 4 (198kHz FM) and BBC Radio 5 (693kHz FM, sports) lead the English-language content.

## SAFETY

Theft is rare in normal hotel rooms, although it's always wise to deposit valuables for safekeeping at the reception desk or, where available, in your in-room safe. Theft is more common at hostels; bring your own lock for your locker.

Watch out for pickpockets in crowded markets and trams. Violent crime is rare, especially involving foreigners, although there have been a small number of gay-bashing incidents recently.

Cars with foreign registration are popular targets for smash-and-grab theft. Don't leave valuable items in the car; remove registration and ID papers and the radio/stereo if possible.

If something is stolen, get a police report for insurance purposes, but don't expect the police to retrieve your property or apprehend the thief. C'est la vie.

There are occasionally some junkie types around the Zeedijk and Gelderskade, and also on the Nieuwendijk near Centraal Station. Generally they won't bother you if you don't bother them.

Bicycles are numerous and can be dangerous for pedestrians. When crossing the street or a bicycle lane look for speeding bikes – the 'silent killers', as we like to call them. Cyclists, meanwhile, should take care to watch out for unwitting foreign tourists in their paths. And always, *always*, lock up your bike with a decent lock.

Finally, two words: dog poo. The city is trying though.

## SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

### Health & Fitness

When the weather's agreeable, it's popular to hit the Vondelpark with your obligatory iPod for a run. At other times locals hit the indoor fitness facilities to burn off that beer.

### GYMS

Apart from the places listed below, several hotels also have fitness centres for day use, including the **Splash Fitnessclub** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 621 22 23; www.splashrenaissance.nl; Kattengat 1) at the Renaissance Hotel and Amsterdam Fitness & Health Club (Map p116) at the NH Amsterdam Centre. Squash City (p254) also has full facilities.

**Barry's Health Centre** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 626 10 36; www.barryshealthcentre.nl; Lijnbaansgracht 350; day/

week pass €15/€27.50; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Large, well-equipped facility that has been renovated with a full complement of the latest machines; it offers classes, plus sauna, steam, tanning beds and a 'cardio theatre'.

**Fitness First** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 530 03 40; www2.fitnessfirst.nl; Nieuwezijds Kolk 15; day €16, month pass from €29; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) A central location is not the only thing this modern gym has going for it. There's a full range of cardio and weightlifting equipment, group classes, sauna, steam and aroma rooms, sun beds, beauty treatments and free video loans for members.

**Garden Gym** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 626 87 72; www.thegarden.nl; Jodenbreestraat 158; day pass €9-12.50, month pass €40-61; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon, Wed & Fri, noon-11pm Tue, noon-10pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun) Has been rated as Amsterdam's best gym for women. The Garden Gym offers aerobics and feel-good activities, including sauna, massage, physiotherapy and dietary advice.

### SAUNAS & BATHS

Saunas are mixed and there's no prudish swimsuit nonsense, so check your modesty at reception (or pick up an extra towel). Note that gay saunas have another purpose entirely.

**Hammam** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 681 48 18; www.hammam-amsterdam.nl; Zaanstraat 88; adult/child 2-5yr/child 6-12yr €15/4/11; ☎ noon-10pm Tue-Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun, last entry 2½hr before closing) In the northwest beyond the Haarlemmerpoort, Hammam is an attractive Turkish-style place for women only, offering a range of spa treatments and victuals such as baklava.

**Koan Float** (Map p92; ☎ 555 00 33; www.koanfloat.nl; Herengracht 321; floating 45/60min €30/38; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) It's not a sauna, but come here for salt-water floatation tanks – and have music piped in if you like. Management swears that 45 minutes of soaking is the equivalent of four hours' sleep, and great for jet lag. The massages are heavenly, performed by qualified masseurs. Inquire about special deals.

**Sauna Deco** (Map p92; ☎ 623 82 15; www.saunadeco.nl; Herengracht 115; admission noon-3pm Mon-Fri €14, all other times €15; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) Sauna Deco is a stunning Scandinavian-style sauna with good auxiliary facilities, a snack bar and lots of well-toned customers. The building itself is a gem, an early creation of architect HP Berlage; its Art Deco furnishings used to grace a Parisian department store. Massages and facials are also available; inquire for rates. Credit cards and PIN cards are not accepted.



## SWIMMING

Amsterdam has a number of indoor pools and summer outdoor pools, some of them historic and very cool. However, we strongly recommend that you phone before you set out. In recent years, some indoor pools shut down in summer to save money, and hours can vary from day to day or season to season. Few are open past 7pm. Also, note that sessions are often restricted for children, nudes, seniors, sports clubs, women, you name it.

**Bijlmersportcentrum** (☎ 697 25 01; Bijlmerpark 76, Bijlmer; adult/child €2.90/2.60; 🕒 Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, ring for times) Near Bijlmer metro station, this sports centre has indoor and outdoor pools with a mixture of lane swimming and family free swims.

**de Mirandabad** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 536 44 44; De Mirandalaan 9; adult/concession €3.30/2.60; 🕒 ring for times) A tropical 'aquatic centre', complete with beach and wave machine, indoor and outdoor pools, tanning booths and waterslide, the Mirandabad is south of the city centre. This is probably the city's best facility for those with little ones. There are also squash courts.

**Flevoparkbad** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 692 50 30; Insulindeweg 1002; adult/senior/child 3-15yr €2.50/1.90/2.40; 🕒 10am-5.30pm May-early Sep, to 7pm in hot weather) Located east of the city centre, there's only an outdoor pool here, but it's packed when the mercury rises. Take tram 7 or 14 to the end.

**Floraparkbad** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 632 90 30; Sneeuwbalweg 5, Amsterdam Noord; adult/child €3.50/3) Florapark has indoor and outdoor pools, an enormous 65m slide, kids' play area and a good sunbathing section, not to mention a sauna and lots of different courses.

**Marnixbad** (Map p86; ☎ 625 48 43; Marnixplein 5-9; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Sat) This fancy new complex is the only place in central Amsterdam where lap swimming is possible, in a 25m pool. While swimming turn your head to the waters of the Singelgracht at eye level right outside the window. The in-house sauna isn't bad either.

**Sloterparkbad** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 506 35 06; Sloterveerlaan 2-4; adult or child €3.75, child under 2yr free; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Set in an attractive recreational area with a yacht harbour in the western suburbs, next to the terminus of tram 14, this place has indoor and outdoor pools. The latter can get overcrowded, but this bath is known for a less frequented nudist island, past the pools and across a causeway. In summer, on cold, rainy days the indoor pool opens.

**Zuiderbad** (Map p110; ☎ 678 13 90; Hobbemastraat 26; adult/child €3/2.70) This 1912 edifice behind the Rijksmuseum has been restored to its original glory, full of tiles, character and appreciative paddlers.

## Outdoor Activities

Soccer, ice-skating, cycling, tennis, swimming and sailing are just a few activities that keep the locals fit – and of course jogging, which is popular in the Vondelpark and other parks. The Amsterdamse Bos has several walking and jogging trails for serious exercise. Bikes are available for rent in many corners of town (see p240) and bike tours are available (p249).

The whole coast of Holland is one long beach, backed by extensive dunes that are ideal for walks. The closest seaside resort is Zandvoort, but quieter resorts can be found further north, such as Castricum north of IJmuiden, or Egmond and Bergen a bit further north near Alkmaar.

For information about sport and leisure activities and venues, visit the **City Hall Information Centre** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 624 11 11; Amstel 1) in the arcade between the Stopera and the city hall. Local community centres (in the phone-book under Buurtcentrum) organise fitness courses.

### CANAL BIKES

Explore the city from a different perspective with a pedal around the canals. Don't worry, it isn't as much work as it sounds. As long as you don't mind getting a little bit wet, it is lots of fun.

**Canal Bike** (per hr per person €8, more than 2 people per boat €7, plus €50 deposit; 🕒 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, later on warm nights in summer), affiliated with Canal Bus (p249), allows you to explore the canals yourself at water level. Landing stages are by the Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Anne Frank Huis and the corner of Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat. The Rijksmuseum location (Map pp100-1) is open year-round, and there are limited hours at other locations.

### GOLF

Golf was long derided as something for the elite but has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, don't go expecting lush rolling links such as at St Andrew's. The Netherlands space crunch means that land is usually more profitably put to other uses. Look under *Golfbanen* in the pink pages of the phone book for several other options.

**Borchland Sportcentrum** (☎ 563 33 33; www.borchland.nl; Borchlandweg 6-12; 9 holes daylight €15, evenings €20; 🕒 8am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) has a nine-hole all par-three course. Call for hours of tutored courses or to set up a private lesson. Take the metro to Strandvliet.

**Openbare Golfbaan Sloten** (☎ 614 24 02; Sloteweg 1045; 9 holes €13-18; 🕒 8.30am-dusk May-Aug, to 8pm Mon-Fri Sep-Apr), located on the southwest side of town, also consists of nine holes. Take bus 145.

### HOCKEY

Dutch (field) hockey teams compete at world-championship level. In contrast to football (soccer), which is played mainly by boys in school yards, streets and parks, hockey is still a somewhat elitist sport played by either sex on expensive club fields. For this reason, visitors will have a hard time playing unless they can become affiliated with a team. The season is similar to that for soccer. For information and matches, contact **Hockey Club Hurley** (☎ 645 44 68; Amsterdamse Bos, Nieuwe Kalfjeslaan 21; 🕒 4pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat, 8.30am-8pm Sun).

### ICE-SKATING

When the canals freeze over in winter (which, to skaters, doesn't happen enough) everyone goes for a skate. Lakes and waterways fill up with skaters, their colourful scarves trailing in the wind. Be aware, however, that people break through the ice and drown every year, so be wary unless you see large groups of people. The edges and areas under bridges are hazardous because they often don't freeze properly.

You can only rent skates at a skating rink. A pair of simple hockey skates costs upwards of €50 at department stores and sports shops. Hockey skates are a cinch for learners, but figure skates are difficult to master. Speed skates put a lot of strain on the ankles, but are definitely the preferred option for serious, high-speed outings. Wood-framed skates that you tie under your shoes can be picked up cheaply at antique and bric-a-brac shops. They make you look quaint but make no mistake, you'll move like the wind if they're sharpened. Besides, they make great souvenirs.

The **Ijscomplex Jaap Eden** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 694 96 52; Radioweg 64; adult/child under 15yr & senior €5.10/3.20; 🕒 Oct-mid-Mar, ring for hours), in the eastern suburb of Watergraafsmeer, has an indoor and outdoor rink. Get there on tram 9 to Kruislaan/Middenweg.

In winter you can also skate on the frozen pond on Museumplein, looking like the top of a wind-up jewellery box.

### INLINE SKATING & SKATEBOARDING

Amsterdam's extensive bike paths and flat, open expanses make the city a dream

destination for Rollerbladers and skateboarders alike. Good places to practice your moves include the asphalt trails in the lovely Vondelpark (p115), the half-pipe on Museumplein (p111) and the long, straight waterside roads of Java Eiland in the Eastern Docklands (Map p122). If the weather's dry, also check out the Friday Night Skate, a popular rolling tour through Amsterdam (see the boxed text, p117).

You can rent in-line skates at **De Vondeltuin** (Map p116; ☎ 664 50 91; www.vondeltuin.nl; Vondelpark 7) for one/two/three hours for €5/7.50/10 from March to October. This kiosk is located near the Amstelveenseweg entrance at the southwestern end of the park. Prices include protective helmet and knee and elbow pads. Skateboarders are advised to bring their own gear to Amsterdam as rentals are thin on the ground.

### KORFBALL

This sport elicits giggles from foreigners who don't quite grasp its charms. Korfbal (literally 'basketball') is a lively hybrid of netball, volleyball and basketball, a passing game where male and female players ultimately target a hoop standing 3.5m high, far taller than in American basketball. It's billed as the world's only unisex sport, with dozens of active clubs in the Benelux and even a global championship. For information on venues in Amsterdam, contact the **Amsterdam Sport Council** (☎ 552 24 90).

### SAILING

It should come as no surprise that the Dutch are avid sailors. Yachting is a national sport – the word 'yacht', after all, comes from the Dutch *jachtschip*, or 'chase ship'. This includes modern open boats and yachts, but also a more traditional kind revered here like nowhere else. On weekends a fleet of restored flat-bottomed boats, called the 'brown fleet' because of their reddish-brown sails, criss-cross the IJsselmeer north of Amsterdam. Some are privately owned but many are rented, and sailing on one is an unforgettable experience.

Vessels on offer range from ancient pilot boats to enormous four-masted clippers. Among the more affordable options are *boten*, one-time fishing boats with a sleeping berth for around eight people, from about €400 per day including skipper. Larger groups could rent a converted freight barge known as a *tjalk*, a Frisian design with jib and spritsail



rig, from about €600 per day. The best web portals include [www.zeilkippers.nl](http://www.zeilkippers.nl), where you can tailor your needs to the port of departure (eg Amsterdam), type of boat, number of passengers and more. Costs are quite reasonable if you can muster a group of fellow enthusiasts, and remember – prices are always negotiable.

Some places only rent boats for day trips, but it's much more fun to go for a full week-end. A popular arrangement: you arrive at the boat Friday at 8pm, sleep on board, sail out early the next morning, and visit several destinations around the IJsselmeer before returning late Sunday afternoon. Note that cancellation insurance is rarely available, and that trips will be called off in heavy weather.

## TENNIS & SQUASH

More courts are listed under *Tennisbanen* and *Squashbanen* in the pink pages of the phone book.

**Borchland Sportcentrum** (☎ 563 33 33; Borchlandweg 6-12; per hr tennis 8am-4pm Mon-Fri €15.50, 4-10pm Mon-Fri or all day Sat & Sun €23, squash until 4pm Mon-Thu €8, after 4pm Mon-Thu €15, after 4pm Fri or all day Sat & Sun €10; 🕒 8am-11pm) A huge complex next to the Amsterdam ArenA in the Bijlmer, it has tennis, squash and badminton courts, bowling alleys, golf and other facilities including a restaurant. Take the metro to Strandvliet.

**Squash City** (Map p86; ☎ 626 78 83; [www.squashcity.com](http://www.squashcity.com); Ketelmakerstraat 6; day pass €7-14, month pass €32-75; 🕒 8.45am-midnight Mon, 7am-midnight Tue-Thu, 7am-11.30pm Fri, 8.45am-7.30pm Sat & Sun) Located across the railway line Haarlemmerplein, at Bickersseiland, west of Centraal Station. Sauna is included with squash-court hire, as is use of a well-equipped fitness centre. Admission price depends on the services you want to use.

**Tenniscentrum Amstelpark** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 301 07 00; [www.tenniscentrum.nl](http://www.tenniscentrum.nl); Koenenkade 8; court hire per hr summer €20, per hr winter outdoor/indoor €20/25) Amstelpark has 42 open and covered courts and runs the country's biggest tennis school. It's conveniently close to the World Trade Center and RAI exhibition buildings, and there are fitness facilities as well.

## Watching Sport FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

Local club Ajax features prominently in the local competition and usually qualifies for the UEFA Champions League, Europe's top competition. Other Dutch leaders are PSV (the Philips Sport Association) from Eindhoven and Feyenoord from Rotterdam, and if any of these clubs play against one another, it's a

big event. Dutch football is 'cool' and 'technical', characterised by keep-the-ball play and surgical strikes. This, after all, is the cradle of 'Total Football'.

**Amsterdam Arena** (☎ 311 13 33; [www.amsterdamarena.nl](http://www.amsterdamarena.nl); Arena Blvd 1, Bijlmermeer) is where Ajax plays. This amazing hi-tech complex with a retractable roof seats 52,000 spectators and has hosted many a major league championship. It also has an Ajax museum with cups and other paraphernalia. Soccer games usually take place Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon during the playing season (early September to early June, with a winter break from just before Christmas to the end of January). Take the metro to Bijlmer or Strandvliet/ArenA station.

Readers have recommended the one-hour guided **stadium tour** (☎ 311 13 36; adult/child €10/8.50; 🕒 11am-4.30pm Apr-Sep, noon-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar, except on game days or major events). The tour includes a walk on the hallowed turf and entry to the museum.

## TELEPHONE

The Dutch phone network, KPN, is efficient, and prices are reasonable by European standards. Phone booths are scattered around town.

**Collect call** (*collect gesprek*; domestic ☎ 0800 01 01, free call; international ☎ 0800 04 10, free call).

**International directory inquiries** (☎ 0900 84 18, per number €1.15).

**National directory inquiries** (☎ 1888, per number €1.30).

**Operator assistance** (☎ 0800 04 10, free call).

## Costs

Calls are time-based, anytime and anywhere. KPN Telecom public phone boxes charge €0.10 per 15 seconds for all national calls (minimum charge €0.20), and €0.10 per nine seconds for calling a mobile phone. Phones in cafés, supermarkets and hotel lobbies often charge more. Calling from private phones is considerably cheaper.

The cost of international calls varies with the destination, and changes frequently due to competition. At the time of writing, calls to Britain and the USA cost €0.056 to €0.071 per minute respectively, and Australia €0.19. The connection charge is about €0.10. To all three countries, rates jump to €0.10 every 13 seconds when ringing from a KPN phone box.

Incoming calls to mobile phones are generally free to the recipient (assuming it's a Dutch mobile phone used in the Netherlands).

Coin phones have made a comeback, but card phones still predominate. You can easily pick up a phone card (see [below](#)). Many public phones accept credit cards, although starting fees are stiff and cards issued outside of the Netherlands may require extra steps during dialling.

## Mobile Phones

The Netherlands uses GSM 900/1800, compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 (some convertible phones work in both places).

Prepaid mobile phones, which run on chips that store call credits, are available at mobile-phone shops starting from around €35 when on special. You can also buy SIM cards for your own mobile phone. Look for KPN, Telfort, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone shops in major shopping areas including along Rokin, Kalverstraat and Leidsestraat. Some stores, such as T for Telecom and Bel Company, handle many brands.

New prepaid phones generally come with a small amount of call time already stored. To top it up, purchase more minutes at one of the branded stores, news dealers or supermarkets, and follow the instructions.

## Phone Codes

To ring abroad, dial ☎ 00 followed by the country code for your target country, the area code (you usually drop the leading 0 if there is one) and the subscriber number. The country code for calling the Netherlands is ☎ 31 and the area code for Amsterdam is ☎ 020; again, drop the leading 0 if you're calling from outside the Netherlands. Do not dial the city code if you are in the area covered by it.

**Free information calls** (☎ 0800)

**Mobile or pager numbers** (☎ 06)

**Paid information calls** (☎ 0900) Cost varies between €0.10 and €1.30 per minute.

## Phonecards

For public telephones, cards are available at post offices, train station counters, VVV and GWK offices and tobacco shops for €5, €10 and €20. KPN's card is the most common but there are tonnes of competitors – T-Mobile,

Orange and Vodafone, among them – who usually have better rates. Train stations have Telfort phone booths that require a Telfort card (available at GWK offices or ticket counters), although there should be KPN booths nearby.

## TIME

The Central European time zone (same as Berlin and Paris) is one hour ahead of the UK, six hours ahead of New York, nine hours ahead of Los Angeles and eight hours behind Sydney. For Daylight Savings Time, clocks are put forward one hour at 2am on the last Sunday in March and back again at 3am on the last Sunday in October.

When telling the time, be aware that the Dutch use 'half' to indicate 'half before' the hour. If you say 'half eight' (8.30 in some dialects of English), a Dutch person will take this to mean 7.30.

## TOILETS

These are not a widespread facility on Dutch streets, apart from the redolent, free-standing public urinals for men in places such as the Red Light District. Many people duck into a café or department store. The standard fee for toilet attendants is €0.50.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

Maps, theatre tickets, hotel bookings and answers to your queries can be obtained at the VVV's **Amsterdam Tourist Office** (Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer, Netherlands Tourism Board; [www.holland.com](http://www.holland.com)). Its staff are always helpful, even if the offices can be quite busy. Note that most VVV publications cost money and there are commissions for services such as hotel bookings.

The **VVV information number** (☎ 0900 400 40 40; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) costs €0.40 a minute; from abroad call ☎ 020-551 25 25 (no extra charge). Offices include inside **Centraal Station** (Map pp62-5; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8am-9pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sun) by platform 2; in front of **Centraal Station** (Map pp62-5; Stationsplein 10; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri); just off **Leidseplein** (Map p116; Stadhouderskade 1; 🕒 10am-6pm); as well as at the **Holland Tourist Information** (🕒 7am-10pm) at Schiphol airport.

For anything related to entertainment, head to Amsterdam's **Uitburo** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 0900 01 91, per minute €0.40; [www.aub.nl](http://www.aub.nl) in Dutch; cnr Leidseplein &

If you're looking to rent office space and other facilities, try **Euro Business Center** (Map p92; ☎ 520 75 00; www.eurobc.nl; Keizersgracht 62-64) or **Regus Business Centre** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 800 020 20 00; www.regus.com; Strawinskylaan 3051). For services such as copying, videoconferencing and a courier, seek out **FedEx/Kinko's** (Map p116; ☎ 0589 09 10; www.kinkos.nl; Overtoom 62).

## Doing Business

Amsterdam makes much of its gateway function to Europe, with its busy airport, easy-going tax laws and educated, multilingual workforce. Many large international companies have their European headquarters and distribution in Amsterdam.

Fees vary between €35 and €60, depending on your nationality.

Visa extensions are handled by the **Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst** (Immigration & Naturalisation Service; ☎ 0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). Study visas must be applied for via your college or university in the Netherlands. For working visas, see below. Also visit [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/netherlands](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/netherlands) for up-to-date visa information, or check with the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Equality has long been taken for granted, although far fewer women than men are employed full-time, and fewer still hold positions in senior management.

In terms of safety, Amsterdam is probably as secure as it gets in the major cities of Europe. There's little street harassment, even in the Red Light District, although it's best to walk with a friend to minimise unwelcome attention.

**Centrum voor Seksuele Gezondheid** (Map p122; ☎ 624 54 26; Sarphatistraat 618; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, Tue also 6-9pm, by appointment) is a clinic offering information and help with sexual problems and birth control, including morning-after pills.

## WORK

Work permits must be applied for by your employer in the Netherlands; in general, the employer must prove that the position cannot be filled by someone from within the EU before offering it to a non-EU citizen. Nationals from many countries must apply for a Temporary Entry Permit (MVV or Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf). Citizens of EU countries, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA are exempt.

You'll need to apply for temporary residence before an employer can ask for your work permit. The process should take five weeks; contact the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

In the Netherlands, residency permits are issued by the **Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst** (☎ 0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). For details of work permits, contact the **CWI** (Employment Services Authority; ☎ 0800 80 01; Westwaarts 11, 2701 AD Zoetermeer). The CWI also runs a bilingual website ([www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl)) with up-to-date job offers.

Marnixstraat), which has loads of free brochures and sells tickets (with a €1.50 mark-up). For bookings from abroad, try the **National Reservations Centre** (☎ 31 70 320 25 00).

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travellers with reduced mobility will find Amsterdam only moderately well equipped to meet their needs. Most offices and museums have lifts and/or ramps and toilets for the disabled. But many budget and midrange hotels are in old buildings with steep stairs and no lifts, and hoteliers' hands are often tied as registered monuments cannot be altered structurally. In addition, the cobbled streets can present problems for wheelchairs. Restaurants tend to be on ground floors, though 'ground' sometimes includes a few steps. The metro stations have lifts, many trains have wheelchair access, and most train stations and public buildings have toilets for the disabled.

People with a disability get discounts on public transport and can park free in designated spots, provided they have a windscreen marker. There are train timetables published in Braille.

The Amsterdam Uitburo and the VVV (see p255) can provide details regarding access to entertainment venues and museums. More questions? Contact the **Stichting Gehandicapten Overleg Amsterdam** (Map p122; SGOA, Amsterdam Forum for the Disabled; ☎ 577 79 55; www.sgoa.nl; Plantage Middenlaan 141).

## VISAS

Tourists from nearly 60 countries – including Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, the USA and most of Europe – need only a valid passport to visit the Netherlands for up to three months. EU nationals can enter for three months with just their national identity card or a passport that expired less than five years ago.

Nationals of most other countries need a so-called Schengen visa, valid within the EU member states (except the UK and Ireland), plus Norway and Iceland, for 90 days within a six-month period.

Schengen visas are issued by Dutch embassies or consulates overseas and can take a while to process (like two months). You'll need a passport valid until at least three months after your visit, and prove you have sufficient funds for your stay and return journey.

# LANGUAGE

It's true – anyone can speak another language. Don't worry if you haven't studied languages before or that you studied a language at school for years and can't remember any of it. It doesn't even matter if you failed English grammar. After all, that's never affected your ability to speak English! And this is the key to picking up a language in another country. You just need to start speaking.



Learn a few key phrases before you go. Write them on pieces of paper and stick them on the fridge, by the bed or even on the computer – anywhere that you'll see them often.

You'll find that locals appreciate travellers trying their language, no matter how muddled you may think you sound. So don't just stand there, say something! If you want to learn more Dutch than we've included here, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's user-friendly *Dutch Phrasebook*.

## SOCIAL

### Meeting People

Hello.

Dag/Hallo.

Goodbye.

Dag.

Please.

Alstublieft/Alsjeblieft. (pol/inf)

Thank you.

Dank u/je (wel). (pol/inf)

Thank you very much.

Hartelijk bedankt.

Yes/No.

Ja/Nee.

Do you speak English?

Spreekt u/Spreek je Engels? (pol/inf)

Do you understand (me)?

Begrijpt u/Begrijp je (me)? (pol/inf)

Yes, I understand.

Ja, ik begrijp het.

No, I don't understand.

Nee, ik begrijp het niet.

Could you please ...?

Kunt u ... alstublieft?

repeat that	dat herhalen
speak more slowly	trager spreken
write it down	dat opschrijven

### Going Out

What's on ...?

Wat is er ... te doen?

locally	hier
this weekend	dit weekend

today	vandaag
tonight	vanavond

Where are the ...?

Waar zijn de ...

clubs	(nacht)clubs
gay venues	gay clubs en cafés
places to eat	eetgelegenheden/ restaurants
pubs	cafés/kroegen

Is there a local entertainment guide?

Heeft u een plaatselijke uitgaansgids?

## PRACTICAL

### Question Words

Who?	Wie?
What?	Wat?
When?	Wanneer?
Where?	Waar?
How?	Hoe?

### Numbers & Amounts

1	één
2	twee
3	drie
4	vier
5	vijf
6	zes
7	zeven
8	acht
9	negen
10	tien
11	elf

12	twaalf
13	dertien
14	veertien
15	vijftien
16	zestien
17	zeventien
18	achttien
19	negentien
20	twintig
21	eenentwintig
22	tweëntwintig
30	dertig
40	veertig
50	vijftig
60	zestig
70	zeventig
80	tachtig
90	negentig
100	honderd
1000	duizend
2000	tweeduizend

### Days

Monday	maandag
Tuesday	dinsdag
Wednesday	woensdag
Thursday	donderdag
Friday	vrijdag
Saturday	zaterdag
Sunday	zondag

### Banking

I'd like to ...

Ik wil graag ...	cash a cheque	een cheque wisselen
	change money	geld/cash wisselen
	change some travellers cheques	(een paar) reischekes wisselen

Where's the nearest ...?

Waar is ...?

automatic teller machine	de dichtsbijzijnde geldautomaat
foreign exchange office	het dichtsbijzijnde wisselkantoor

### Post

Where is the post office?

Waar is het postkantoor?

I want to send a ...

Ik wil een ... versturen.	fax	fax
	parcel	pakket
	postcard	briefkaart

I want to buy ...

Ik wil een ... kopen.	an aerogram	luchtpostblad/aerogram
	an envelope	envelop
	a stamp	postzegel

### Phone & Mobile Phones

I want to buy a phone card.

Ik wil een telefoonkaart kopen.

I want to make ...

Ik wil ...	a call (to ...)	telefoneren (naar ...)
	reverse-charge/collect call	voor rekening van de opgeroepene telefoneren

Where can I find a/an ...?

Waar vind ik een ...?

I'd like a/an ...

Ik wil graag een ...	adaptor plug	adaptor plug
	charger for my phone	lader voor mijn telefoon
	(rechargeable) battery for my phone	(herlaadbare) batterij voor mijn telefoon
	mobile/cell phone for hire	GSM (telefoon) huren
	prepaid mobile/cell phone	vooraftbetaalde GSM (telefoon)
	SIM card for your network	SIM-kaart voor uw netwerk

### Internet

Where's the local internet café?

Waar is het plaatselijke internetcafé?

I'd like to ...

Ik wil graag ...	check my email	mijn email checken
	get online	op het net gaan

### Transport

What time does the ... leave?

Hoe laat vertrekt ...?	bus	de bus
	ferry	de veerboot/ferry
	train	de trein

What time's the ... bus?

Hoe laat is de ... bus?	first	eerste
	last	laatste
	next	volgende



Are you free? (taxi)  
 Bent u vrij?  
 Please put the meter on.  
 Gebruik de meter alstublieft.  
 How much is it to ...?  
 Hoeveel kost het naar ...?  
 Please take me to (this address).  
 Breng mij alstublieft naar (dit address).

## FOOD

For more detailed information on food and dining out, see p156.

breakfast	ontbijt
lunch	lunch/middageten
dinner	diner/avondeten
snack	snack
eat	eten
drink	drinken

Can you recommend a ...

Kunt u een ... aanbevelen? (pol)

Kan je een ... aanbevelen? (inf)

bar/pub	bar/café
café	café/koffiehuis
coffeeshop	koffieshop (note: a café where legal soft drugs are sold)
restaurant	restaurant

## EMERGENCIES

It's an emergency!  
 Dit is een noodgeval!  
 Could you please help me/us?  
 Kunt u me/ons alstublieft helpen?  
 Call the police/a doctor/an ambulance!  
 Haal de politie/een dokter/een ziekenwagen!  
 Where's the police station?  
 Waar is het politiebureau?

## HEALTH

Where's the nearest ...?  
 Waar is de dichtstbijzijnde ...?  
 chemist (night) apothek (met nachtdienst)  
 diner/avondeten  
 doctor dokter  
 hospital ziekenhuis

I need a doctor (who speaks English).  
 Ik heb een dokter nodig (die Engels spreekt).

## Symptoms

I have (a) ...  
 Ik heb ...  
 fever koorts  
 headache hoofdpijn  
 pain pijn

plage – beach	straat – street
plein – square	strand – beach
polder – area of drained land	strippenkaart – stampable multi-use ticket used on public transport
postbus – post office box	toren – tower
Randstad – literally 'rim-city'; the urban agglomeration including Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Den Haag	VVV – tourist office
rondvaart – boat tour	waag – old weigh house
spionnetje – outside mirror allowing a house occupant to see who's at the door downstairs	wallen – Red Light District
stadhuis – town hall	wielklem – wheel clamp attached to illegally parked vehicles
stedelijk – civic, municipal	zaal – hall
stichting – foundation, institute	ziekenhuis – hospital

## GLOSSARY

apothek – chemist/pharmacy  
 bibliotheek – library  
 bier – beer  
 bos – woods, forest  
 broodje – breadroll (with filling)  
 bruin café – brown café; traditional Dutch pub  
 burgwal – fortified embankment  
 café – pub, bar; also known as kroeg  
 coffeeshop (also spelt koffieshop in Dutch) – café authorised to sell cannabis  
 CS – Centraal Station  
 dagschotel – daily special in restaurants  
 drop – salted or sweet liquorice  
 dwarsstraat – street connecting two (former) canals  
 eetcafé – cafés serving meals  
 fiets – bicycle  
 gasthuis – hospice, hospital (old)  
 gezellig – convivial, cosy  
 GG&GD – Municipal Medical & Health Service  
 gracht – canal  
 grachtengordel – canal belt  
 GVB – Gemeentevervoerbedrijf; Amsterdam municipal transport authority  
 GWK – Grenswisselkantoor; official currency exchanges  
 hof – courtyard  
 hofje – almshouse or series of buildings around a small courtyard, such as the Begijnhof  
 jenever – Dutch gin; also spelled genever  
 kaas – cheese  
 kade – quay  
 kassa – cashier, check-out  
 kerk – church  
 koffiehuis – espresso bar (as distinct from a coffeeshop)  
 koninklijk – royal  
 korfbal – a cross between netball, volleyball and basketball  
 markt – town square  
 merguez – type of spicy sausage  
 NS – Nederlandse Spoorwegen; national railway company  
 openbare – public  
 paleis – palace

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## INDEX

See also separate indexes for:  
 Drinking & Smoking p268  
 Eating p269  
 Gay & Lesbian Amsterdam p270  
 Nightlife & Arts p270  
 Shopping p270  
 Sights p272  
 Sleeping p273  
 Top Picks p274

## SYMBOLS

5 Days Off 18

## A

Aalsmeer 238  
 accommodation 210-24, *see also* *Sleeping subindex*  
 apartments 211  
 B&Bs 210  
 City Centre 212-14  
 costs 211-12  
 De Pijp 222  
 Eastern Docklands 223-4  
 houseboats 210  
 Jordaan 214-15  
 Medieval Centre 212-13  
 Nieuwmarkt 214  
 Old South 219-20  
 Oosterpark 224  
 party hotels 210-11  
 Plantage 223  
 Red Light District 213-14  
 rentals 211  
 reservations 211  
 Southern Canal Belt 217-19  
 stoner hotels 210-11  
 Vondelpark 220-2  
 Western Canal Belt 215-17  
 youth hostels 211  
 activities 251-4, *see also* *individual activities*  
 AIDS 246  
 air travel 239

000 map pages

000 photographs

Alkmaar 236-7, **236**  
 ambulance 245  
 Amsterdam Marathon 19  
 Amsterdam Pride Festival 18, **12**  
 Amsterdam Underground Festival 19  
 Anne Frank 94  
 Anne Frank Huis 93  
 apartments 211, *see also* *Sleeping subindex*  
 architecture 45-52  
 arts 32-42, 196-202, *see also* *individual arts*, *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 ATMs 248

## B

B&Bs 210, *see also* *Sleeping subindex*  
 babysitters 244  
 bargaining 136-7  
 bars, *see* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 bathrooms 255  
 baths 251  
 beer 178  
 costs 180  
 beer cafés 179, *see also* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 Berlage, Hendrik Petrus 51  
 bicycle travel, *see* *cycling*  
 bike tours, *see* *cycling tours*  
 blues 197-8, *see also* *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 boat tours  
 Alkmaar 237  
 Amsterdam 249-50  
 Haarlem 230  
 Leiden 232  
 Utrecht 235  
 Zaanse Schans 238  
 boat travel 240, **9**  
 books 42  
 history 26  
 Red Light District 42  
 Broek in Waterland 134  
 brown cafés 179, *see also* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 Bullewijk River 132

bus travel 243  
 business hours 244, *see also* *inside front cover*  
 cafés 157, 180  
 coffeeshops 180  
 restaurants 157  
 shops 136

## C

cafés, *see* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*, *Eating subindex*, food  
 Calvinism 23  
 Canal Belt 77, 91, *see also* *Southern Canal Belt*, *Western Canal Belt*  
 canal bikes 240, 252, **9**  
 canal boats 240  
 canal buses 240  
 canals 77, *see also* *Sights subindex*  
 cannabis, *see* *marijuana*  
 Cannabis Cup 19  
 car travel 241-2  
 Carnaval 16  
 cell phones 255  
 Centraal Station 70-1  
 chess 191  
 children, travel with 105, 244, *see also* *Sights subindex*  
 churches, *see* *Sights subindex*  
 cinema 39, 200-1, *see also* *film*, *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 City Centre 61-83, **62-5**  
 accommodation 212-14  
 drinking 180-5  
 food 158-61  
 shopping 137-42  
 smoking 180-5  
 classical music 37, 199-200, *see also* *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 climate 244  
 clothing, *see* *Shopping subindex*  
 clothing sizes 138  
 clubs 196-7, *see also* *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 coffee 178  
 coffeeshops 179, *see also* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 business hours 180  
 comedy 201, *see also* *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 Commemoration of the February Strike 16  
 consulates 245  
 costs 20  
 accommodation 211-12  
 beer 180  
 discount cards 107, 245  
 food 157  
 marijuana 180  
 taxes 136  
 courses 245  
 credit cards 248  
 culture 3, 30-2, 184  
 customs regulations 245  
 Cuypers, Pierre 50  
 cycling 17, 125, 240, **2, 9**  
 cycling tours 126-7, 132-4, 249, **126, 132, 133**

## D

Dam 69  
 Dam Tot DamLoop 19  
 dance 41, 201-2, *see also* *Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 Dance Valley 18  
 de Keyser, Hendrick 48  
 De Pijp 118-20, **119**  
 accommodation 222  
 drinking 192  
 food 171-3  
 shopping 153  
 De Ronde Hoep 132  
 designer bars 179, *see also* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 diamonds 113, 154  
 disabilities, travellers with 256  
 drinking 178-94, *see also* *Drinking & Smoking subindex*  
 business hours 180  
 City Centre 180-5  
 De Pijp 192  
 Eastern Docklands 192-3  
 Eastern Islands 192-3

Jordaan 185-7  
 Medieval Centre 180-3  
 Nieuwmarkt 184-5  
 Old South 191-2  
 Oosterpark 194  
 Plantage 192-3  
 Red Light District 183-4  
 Southern Canal Belt 189-91  
 Vondelpark 192  
 Western Canal Belt 187-9  
 driving, *see* car travel  
 drugs 31, 140, 179, *see also* marijuana  
 Durgerdam 133

**E**  
 Eastern Docklands 121, 124-6, **122**  
 accommodation 223-4  
 cycling tour 126-7, **126**  
 drinking 192-3  
 food 174  
 shopping 153  
 Eastern Islands 121, 124, **122**  
 drinking 192-3  
 food 173-4  
 shopping 153  
 electricity 245  
 Elfstedentocht 16  
 embassies 245  
 emergencies 245  
 entertainment, *see* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 environmental issues 42-3  
 exchange rates, *see inside front cover*  
 experimental music 37

**F**  
 ferries 240  
 festivals 16-20, *see also individual festivals*  
 music 17, 18, 19  
 film, *see* cinema  
 fire services 245  
 food 156-76, *see also Eating subindex*  
 booking 157-8  
 City Centre 158-61  
 costs 157  
 De Pijp 171-3  
 Eastern Docklands 174

**000** map pages  
**000** photographs

Eastern Islands 173-4  
 Jordaan 161-3  
 Medieval Centre 158-60  
 Nieuwmarkt 160-1  
 Old South 170  
 Oosterpark 174  
 Plantage 173  
 Red Light District 160  
 self-catering 158  
 Southern Canal Belt 166-70  
 tipping 158  
 Vondelpark 170-1  
 Western Canal Belt 163-6  
 football 73, 254  
 Fortuyn, Pim 44  
 Frank, Anne, *see* Anne Frank  
 free activities 103

**G**  
 gables 47, **47**  
 galleries, *see* Sights *subindex*  
 gardens, *see* Sights *subindex*  
 gay marriage 207  
 gay travellers 30, 204-8  
*see also* Gay & Lesbian Amsterdam *subindex*  
 festivals 18, **12**  
 internet resources 208  
 geology 42  
 gezellig 182  
 gin 178  
 Golden Age 33-5  
 golf 252-3  
 government 44-5  
 Grachtenfestival 18, **12**  
 grand cafés 179-80, *see also* Drinking & Smoking *subindex*  
 gyms 251

**H**  
 Haarlem 228-30, **229**  
 Hals, Frans 33  
 Hartjesdagen Zeedijk 18  
 health 246  
 herring 163  
 Hirsi Ali, Ayaan 44  
 history 22-30  
 books 26  
 HIV/AIDS 246  
 hockey 253  
 hofjes 85, *see also* Sights *subindex*  
 holidays 246

Holland Festival 17  
 hotels, *see* Sleeping *subindex*  
 houseboats 210, *see also* Sleeping *subindex*  
 Hudson, Henry 74  
**I**  
 ice-skating 253  
 immigration 29, 54  
 International Fashion Week 18  
 International Theatre School Festival 18  
 internet access 246  
 internet resources 20-1  
 gay & lesbian travellers 208  
 Irish pubs 180, *see also* Drinking & Smoking *subindex*  
 itineraries 15, 60

**J**  
 jazz 37-8, 197-8, *see also* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 Jazz op het Dak 18  
 jenever 178  
 Jewish Amsterdam 29  
 Anne Frank Huis 93  
 history 24  
 Joods Historisch Museum 79  
 Portuguese-Israelite Synagogue 79  
 Jordaan 84-90, **86**  
 accommodation 214-15  
 drinking 185-7  
 food 161-3  
 shopping 142-5  
 smoking 185-7  
 walking tour 89-90, **89**  
 Jordaan Festival 19  
 Julidans 18  
 Jumping Amsterdam 16

**K**  
 Keukenhof 233  
 Koninginnedag 17, **12**  
 korfbal 253

**L**  
 language 53-6, 137, 258-61, *see also inside front cover*  
 courses 245  
 left luggage 239, 242  
 legal matters 247  
 Leiden 231-3, **231**

lesbian travellers 30, 204-8, *see also* Gay & Lesbian Amsterdam *subindex*  
 festivals 18, **12**  
 internet resources 208  
 Liberation Day 17  
 literature 42  
 Luilak 17

**M**  
 magazines 248-9  
 Magna Plaza 72  
 maps 247  
 marijuana 178, *see also* Drinking & Smoking *subindex*  
 costs 180  
 Hash & Marijuana Museum 76  
 Marken 134  
 markets, *see* Shopping *subindex*, Sights *subindex*  
 measures, *see inside front cover*  
 medical services 247  
 Medieval Centre 66-74  
 accommodation 212-13  
 drinking 180-3  
 food 158-60  
 shopping 137-40  
 smoking 180-3  
 metric conversions, *see inside front cover*  
 metro 243  
 Miracle of Amsterdam 73  
 mobile phones 255  
 modern classical music 37  
 Mondriaan, Piet 35  
 money 247-8, *see also inside front cover*  
 credit cards 248  
 discount cards 245  
 Monnickendam 134  
 motorcycle travel 241-2  
 Museum Night 19  
 museums 107, *see also* Sights *subindex*  
 music 36-8, *see also* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 blues 197-8  
 classical 37, 199-200  
 experimental 37  
 festivals 17, 18, 19  
 jazz 37-8, 197-8  
 modern classical 37  
 pop 38  
 rock 38, 197-8  
 world 38, 198-9

**N**  
 National Cycling Day 17  
 National Museum Weekend 16  
 National Windmill Day 17  
 Negen Straatjes 91  
 Nes aan de Amstel 133  
 New Year's Eve 19-20  
 newspapers 53, 248-9  
 Nieuwmarkt 77-82  
 accommodation 214  
 drinking 184-5  
 food 160-1  
 shopping 141-2  
 smoking 184-5  
 walking tour 82-3, **83**  
 nightlife 196-202, *see also* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 North Sea Jazz Festival 18

**O**  
 Old South 109-14, **110**  
 accommodation 219-20  
 drinking 191-2  
 food 170  
 shopping 152  
 walking tour 113-14, **113**  
 Oosterpark 128-9, **129**  
 accommodation 224  
 drinking 194  
 food 174  
 Open Garden Days 17  
 Open Monumentendag 19  
 opening hours, *see* business hours  
 Oude Kerk 75, **47**  
 Ouderkerk aan de Amstel 132  
 Over Het IJ Festival 18

**P**  
 painting 32-6  
 CoBRa 36  
 De Stijl 35-6  
 Flemish & Dutch Schools 32  
 palaces, *see* Sights *subindex*  
 Parade 18  
 Parkpop 17  
 parks & gardens, *see* Sights *subindex*  
 party hotels 210-11, *see also* Sleeping *subindex*  
 photography 36  
 FOAM 99

HUG Gallery for International Photography 143  
 Huis Marseille 95  
 pickpockets 251  
 PIN cards 248  
 Pinkpop 17  
 planning 21, 60  
 Plantage 121-4, **122**  
 accommodation 223  
 drinking 192-3  
 food 173  
 shopping 153  
 police 245  
 politics 44-5  
 pop music 38  
 population 32  
 postal services 250

**Q**  
 Queen's Day festival 17, **12**

**R**  
 radio 208, 250  
 recycling 43  
 Red Light District 74-7  
 accommodation 213-14  
 books 42  
 drinking 183-4  
 food 160  
 shopping 140-1  
 smoking 183-4  
 walking tour 82-3, **83**  
 Rembrandt 33  
 sterfhuis 90  
 Rembrandtplein 104  
 Remembrance Day 17  
 responsible travel 21  
 restaurants, *see* Eating *subindex*, food  
 Rijksmuseum 111, **7, 50**  
 Robeco Summer Concerts 18  
 Robodock Festival 19  
 rock music 38, 197-8, *see also* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 Rollerblading 253  
 Roots Music Festival 17

**S**  
 sailing 253-4  
 saunas 251  
 scooters 240  
 sea level 80  
 senior travellers 245  
 shopping 136-54, *see also* Shopping *subindex*  
 business hours 136  
 City Centre 137-42

De Pijp 153  
 Eastern Docklands 153  
 Eastern Islands 153  
 Jordaan 142-5  
 Medieval Centre 137-40  
 Nieuwmarkt 141-2  
 Old South 152  
 Plantage 153  
 Red Light District 140-1  
 Southern Canal Belt 148-51  
 Vondelpark 152-3  
 Western Canal Belt 145-8  
 Sinterklaas 19  
 skateboarding 253  
 skating 117, 253  
 smart drugs 140, *see also* Shopping *subindex*  
 smoking 178-94, *see also* Drinking & Smoking *subindex*  
 ban 188  
 City Centre 180-5  
 Jordaan 185-7  
 Medieval Centre 180-3  
 Nieuwmarkt 184-5  
 Red Light District 183-4  
 Southern Canal Belt 189-91  
 Western Canal Belt 187-9  
 snooker 191  
 soccer 73, 254  
 Southern Canal Belt 98-108, **100-1**  
 accommodation 217-19  
 drinking 189-91  
 food 166-70  
 shopping 148-51  
 smoking 189-91  
 walking tour 107-8, **108**  
 spoken word performances 201-2, *see also* Nightlife & Arts *subindex*  
 sporting events  
 Amsterdam Marathon 19  
 Dam Tot DamLoop 19  
 Elfstedentocht 16  
 Jumping Amsterdam 16  
 sports 251-4, *see also individual sports*  
 squash 254  
 STDs 246  
 Stille Omgang 16  
 stoner hotels 210-11, *see also* Sleeping *subindex*  
 strippenkaart 243  
 sustainable travel 21  
 sweets 165  
 swimming 252

**U**  
 Uitdam 134  
 Uitmarkt 18  
 urban planning 43  
 Utrecht 233-6, **234**

**V**  
 vacations 246  
 van Campen, Jacob 48  
 Van Gogh Museum 109-11, 200, **7, 52**  
 van Gogh, Theo 34, 44  
 van Gogh, Vincent 35, 109  
 van Rijn, Rembrandt, *see* Rembrandt  
 Verhoeven, Paul 39, 40-1  
 Vermeer, Johannes 34  
 Vingboons, Justus 48  
 Vingboons, Philips 48  
 visas 256  
 Volendam 134  
 Vondelpark 115-17, **116**  
 accommodation 220-2  
 drinking 192  
 food 170-1  
 shopping 152-3  
 Vondelpark Open-Air Theatre 17



**W**  
 walking tours  
 Jordaan 89-90, **89**  
 Nieuwmarkt 82-3, **83**  
 Old South 113-14, **113**  
 Red Light District 82-3, **83**  
 Southern Canal Belt  
 107-8, **108**  
 Western Canal Belt  
 96-7, **97**  
 wall tablets 48, **48**  
 water 178  
 Watergang 134  
 weather 244  
 weights, *see inside front cover*  
 Westerkerk 93, **49**  
 Western Canal Belt 91-7, **92**  
 accommodation 215-17  
 drinking 187-9  
 food 163-6  
 shopping 145-8  
 smoking 187-9  
 walking tour 96-7, **97**  
 Western Islands 130  
 wine 178  
 women in Amsterdam  
 30, 31  
 women travellers 256  
 work 256-7  
 world music 38, 198-9,  
*see also Nightlife & Arts subindex*  
 World Press Photo 17  
 World Book Capital 17

**Y**  
 youth hostels 211, *see also Sleeping subindex*

**Z**  
 Zaanse Schans 237-8

## DRINKING & SMOKING BARS

Amstel Bar & Brasserie  
 189  
 Café Het Schuim 180  
 Café LEF 183  
 Café Lindeboom 237  
 Café Studio 230  
 Café Zilt 183  
 De Buurvrouw 183

**000** map pages  
**000** photographs

De Koe 186  
 Proeflokaal in den Uiver 230

## BEER CAFÉS

Brouwerij 't IJ 192  
 Café Vrije Vogelhuus 237  
 De Bekeerde Suster 184  
 Gollem 180  
 In de Wildeman 180  
 Kafé België 235  
 't Arendsnest 187

## BIKE CAFÉS

Het Fietscafé 185

## BROWN CAFÉS

Café 1900 230  
 Café de Doelen 184  
 Café de Pels 187  
 Café Het Melkwoud 230  
 Café Het Molenpad 187  
 Café Koosje 193  
 Café Nol 186  
 Café 't Monumentje 186  
 Café 't Smalle 186, **4**  
 Café van Zuylen 180-1  
 De Doffer 187  
 De II Prinsen 187-8  
 De Pieper 186  
 De Prins 186  
 De Reiger 186  
 De Schutter 181  
 De Sluyswacht 184-5  
 De Tuin 186  
 De Twee Zwaantjes 186  
 De Zwart 181  
 Eylders 189  
 Het Papeneiland 186  
 Hoppe 181, **4**  
 In 't Aepjen 183  
 Lokaal 't Loosje 185  
 Oosterling 189  
 Oporto 181  
 Pilsener Club 181  
 Pilsvogel 192  
 Sarphaat 192  
 Van Puffelen 188  
 Wildschut 191-2

## CHESS CAFÉS

Café de Laurierboom 191  
 Max Euweplein 191

## COFFEESHOPS

Abraxas 181  
 Baba 183  
 Barney's 188  
 Bulldog 189  
 Dampkring 181, **11**

Dutch Flowers 188  
 El Guapo 181  
 Global Chillage 190  
 Greenhouse 183  
 Grey Area 188  
 Hill Street Blues 185  
 Homegrown Fantasy 181  
 Kandinsky 181  
 La Tertulia 186  
 Other Side 206  
 Rokerij (Jordaan) 187  
 Rokerij (Southern Canal Belt) 190  
 Siberië 188

## DESIGNER BARS & CAFÉS

18 Twintig 192  
 Bar Bep 181-2  
 Bar Ça 192  
 Brix 188  
 Bubbles & Wines  
 Champagne Bar 183  
 De Huyschkaemer 190  
 Diep 182  
 Dylan 188  
 Finch 187  
 G-Spot 187  
 Kamer 401 190  
 Lime 183  
 Lux 190  
 Proust 187  
 Suzy Wong 190  
 Weber 190  
 Wolvenstraat 23 188

## DRAG BARS

Lellebel 206

## GAY BARS

Amstel Taverne 206  
 April 206  
 ARC 206  
 Café Bardewijn 205  
 Café Het Mandje 74  
 Cockring 205  
 Cuckoo's Nest 205  
 De Engel van Amsterdam  
 205  
 Entre Nous 206  
 Fetto 205  
 Montmartre 206  
 Prik 205  
 Queen's Head 205  
 Soho 206

## GRAND CAFÉS

Café Americain 190, **5**  
 Café Dante 182, **5**  
 Café de Jaren 185, **5**

Café de Vergulde Gaper  
 189  
 Café-Restaurant Dantzig  
 185  
 De Kroon 190  
 Dulac 189  
 Luxembourg 182, **4**  
 Winkel van Sinkel 235

## IRISH PUBS

Durty Nelly's 183  
 Molly Malone's 184  
 Mulligans 190  
 Tara 182

## LESBIAN BARS & CAFÉS

Café Sugar 205  
 Saarein 206  
 Sappho 207  
 Vivelvavie 206

## OTHER CAFÉS

Amstel Haven 194  
 B Van B Café 182  
 Bloem 193  
 Café Cuba 185  
 Café Ledig Erf 235  
 Café l'Esperance 233  
 Café Thijssen 187  
 Café-Restaurant Kapitein  
 Zeppo's 184  
 Herberg Hooghoudt 190  
 Het Groot Melkhuis 192  
 Het Koethuis 233  
 Janvier 191  
 KHL 193  
 North End 233  
 Pompadour 189  
 Twins Backstage 191  
 Waag Café 185

## SNOOKER CLUBS

Snookerclub de Keizers  
 191  
 Snookerclub Final Touch  
 191

## SQUAT BARS

Vrankrijk 182

## TASTING HOUSES

Be Blauwe Parade 182-3  
 De Admiraal 189  
 De Drie Fleschjes 183  
 Proeflokaal de Ooievaar  
 184  
 Proeflokaal Wijnand  
 Fockinck 184

## THEATRE CAFÉS

Blincker 184  
 Café Schiller 191  
 Café Vertigo 192  
 De Balie 191  
 De Brakke Grond 184  
 De Smooshaan 191  
 Felix Meritis Café 189  
 Star Ferry 193

## EATING AFRICAN

Lalibela 171  
 Pygma-Lion 168

## ASIAN

Cambodja City 172  
 Eat Mode 160  
 Kam Yin 160  
 Noodl 233  
 Wok to Walk 170

## BAKERIES

Bakken Met Passie 173  
 Gary's Muffins 175  
 Patisserie Culinaire 237

## BRASSERIES

Brasserie Harkema 159

## BUFFET RESTAURANTS

Vroom & Dreesman 230

## BURGERS

De Burgermeester 173

## CAFÉS

Bloemgracht 163  
 Buffet Van Odette 164-5  
 Café de Pijp 172  
 Café Einstein 232  
 Café le Journal 235  
 Café Morlang 168  
 Café Vlinder 163  
 Café Walem 168  
 Eko Eetkafé 230  
 Foodism 165  
 Goodies 165  
 Hein 165  
 Henry's Grand Café 237  
 Het Hof van Alkmaar 237  
 Kinderkookkafé 171  
 Lust 165  
 M Café 169  
 Nielsen 165  
 Skek 160  
 't Blauwe Theehuis 171  
 Villa Zeezicht 159  
 Winkel 163

## CHEESE

De Tromp Kaashuis 237

## CHINESE

Nam Kee 160  
 New King 160  
 Oriental City 159  
 Sea Palace 158

## CONTEMPORARY DUTCH

De Blaffende Vis 163  
 d'Vijff Vlieghen 158-9  
 Hemelse Modder 161  
 In den Dooplot 233  
 Pancake Bakery 165-6  
 Pannenkoekenhuis  
 Upstairs 159  
 Supper Club 158  
 Werck 164

## FRENCH

Blender 175  
 Bordewijk 161  
 Café-Restaurant  
 Amsterdam 175  
 Christophe 163-4  
 De Belhamel 164  
 De Struisvogel 164

Jean Jean 161  
 Klokspijs 172  
 La Rive 166  
 Oudaan 235  
 Van Vlaanderen 166  
 Voorbij het Einde 174

## FRITES

De Haerlemsche  
 Vlaamse 230  
 Vlaams Friteshuis 160  
 Wil Graanstra Friteshuis  
 166

## FUSION

Bazar Amsterdam 172  
 Lof 164  
 Stout 164

## GREEK

De 2 Grieken 164  
 Grekas 159

## ICE CREAM

Gelateria Italiano  
 Peppino 173

## INDIAN

Balti House 172  
 Koh-l-Noor 166

## INDONESIAN

Blauw 235  
 Bojo 169  
 Cilubang 164  
 Kantijl to Go 160  
 Sama Sebo 170  
 Tempo Doeloe 167  
 Tujuh Maret 167  
 Waroeng Asje 171

## INTERNATIONAL

Blauw aan de Wal 160  
 Burger's Patio 162  
 Café-Restaurant  
 Amsterdam 175  
 Cobra Café-Restaurant  
 170

De Kas 174  
 De Kwebbelen 232  
 Fifteen 174  
 Gare de l'Est 174  
 Herrie 167  
 Klokspijs 172  
 Koffiehuus van den  
 Volksbond 174

Local 162  
 Odessa 174  
 Pacific Parc 175  
 Panama 174  
 Plancius 173  
 Polman's 235  
 Puyck 171  
 Restaurant PS 175  
 Sluizer 167  
 Spektakel 230  
 Szmulewicz 168

## ITALIAN

A Tavola 173  
 Abe Veneto 173  
 Cinema Paradiso 162  
 Pasta di Mamma 171  
 Pasta e Basta 167  
 Pastini 168  
 Renzo's 170  
 Ristorante d'Antica 166  
 Saturnino 167  
 Segugio 166

## JAPANESE

Japanese Pancake  
 World 162  
 Wagamama 169  
 Zen 172  
 Zushi 169

## KOSHER DELIS

Sal Meijer 175

## MEDITERRANEAN

Balthazar's Keuken 161  
 Blender 175  
 Envy 164  
 Frezza 232-8  
 Le Petit Latin 159  
 Sabor de Maria 170

## MEXICAN

Los Pilonos 168  
 Rose's Cantina 167-8

## MIDDLE EASTERN

Bazar Amsterdam 172  
 Nomads 162  
 Zagros 172

## MOROCCAN

Mamouche 171-2  
 Paloma Blanca 171

## ORGANIC

Deeg 235  
 Dolores 160

## PERUVIAN

Casa Perú 164

## SANDWICH SHOPS

Bagels & Beans 169-70  
 Broodje Mokum 163  
 Broodje van Kootje 170  
 Letting 166  
 Loekie 170  
 Maoz Falafel 170  
 't Kuytje 166  
 Van den Berg's  
 Broodjesbar 160  
 Van Dobben 169  
 Village Bagels 169  
 Volendamer Vishandel  
 160

## SEAFOOD

Bark 170  
 Lucius 158  
 Restaurant Red 167

## SOUP

De Soepwinkel 173

## SPANISH

Duende 163  
 Gala 170  
 Más Tapas 173  
 Nas Brasas 230  
 Pata Negra 168

**STEAKHOUSES**

Piet de Leeuw 168

**SURINAMESE**Albert Cuyp 67 172  
Nieuw Albina 173  
Waroeng Asje 171**SWEETS**

Taart van m'n Tante 173

**SWISS**

Café Bern 161

**TAKEAWAY**Febo 169  
Noodle & Go 163  
Pasta di Mamma 171  
Small World Catering 163  
Sterk Staaltje 161  
Uliveto 169**THAI**Krua Thai 160  
Rakang Thai 161  
Take Thai 167  
Thai Corner 167**TRADITIONAL DUTCH**De Keuken Van 1870 159  
Haesje Claes 159  
Hap Hmm 171  
La Falote 170  
Moeders 162  
Moeder's Pot Eethuisje 163**TURKISH**Divan 162  
Turkiye 172**VEGETARIAN**Betty's 175  
De Vliegende Schote 162  
Golden Temple 168  
Green Planet 159  
De Bolhoed 162**GAY & LESBIAN AMSTERDAM DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**Amstel Taverne 206  
April 206  
ARC 206000 map pages  
000 photographsArgos 205  
Café Bardewijn 205  
Café Het Mandje 74  
Café Sugar 205  
Cockring 205  
Cuckoo's Nest 205  
De Engel van Amsterdam 205De Spijker 206  
De Trut 205  
Entre Nous 206  
Exit 207  
Fetto 205Gay Super Bingo 206  
Lellebel 206  
Montmartre 206  
Other Side 206  
Prik 205  
Queen's Head 205  
Saarein 206  
Sappho 207  
Soho 206  
Thermos Day Sauna 205  
Thermos Night Sauna 206  
Vivelavie 206  
Web 205**SHOPPING**Intermale 204  
Mr B 204  
Rob 204  
Shirt Shop 204  
Vrolijk 204**SLEEPING**Aero Hotel 207  
Amistad Hotel 207  
Black Tulip Hotel 207  
Orfeo Hotel 207**NIGHTLIFE & ARTS CLASSICAL MUSIC**Bethaniënlooster 199  
Beurs van Berlage 199  
Concertgebouw 111-12, 199, 51  
Conservatorium van Amsterdam 199  
Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ 125, 200  
Muziektheater 200  
Philharmonie 230**CINEMA**Cinecenter 200  
De Uitkijk 200Filmmuseum 200  
Het Ketelhuis 200  
Kriterion 200  
Movies 200  
Rialto Cinema 200  
Springhaver Theater 235  
Tuschinskithheater 200**CLUBS**Bitterzoet 196  
Dansen bij Jansen 196  
De Nieuwe Anita 197  
Escape 196, 10  
Jimmy Woo 197  
Odeon 196-7  
Panama 197  
Patronaat 230  
Powerzone 197  
Sugar Factory 197  
To Night 197  
Vakzuid 197  
Westergasterras 197  
Winston Kingdom 197**COMEDY**Boom Chicago 201, 10  
Comedy Café Amsterdam 201  
De Kleine Komedie 201**GAY CLUBS**

Exit 207

**GAY SAUNAS**Thermos Day Sauna 205  
Thermos Night Sauna 206**LEATHER BARS**Argos 205  
De Spijker 206  
Web 205**LESBIAN CLUBS**

De Trut 205

**PERFORMANCE VENUES**Amsterdam ArenA 199  
Melkweg 199  
Paradiso 199  
Stadsschouwburg 199  
Tivoli 235**ROCK, JAZZ & BLUES**Bimhuis 197  
Bourbon Street Jazz & Blues Club 198  
Brasil Music Bar 198Café de WW 233  
Café Stieles 230  
Casablanca 198  
Cotton Club 198  
De Heeren Van Aemstel 198  
Heineken Music Hall 198  
Jazz Café Alto 198  
Jazzcafé the Duke 233  
Korsakoff 198  
Lisboa 198  
Maloe Melo 198  
Pepsi Stage 198**THEATRE, DANCE & SPOKEN WORD**Amsterdams Marionetten Theater 201-2  
Amsterdamse Bos Theatre 202  
Casablanca Variété 202  
Cosmic Theatre 202  
De Balie 202  
De Brakke Grond 202  
Felix Meritis 202  
Fracasti 202  
Koninklijk Theater Carré 105, 199, 10  
Openluchttheater 202  
Stadsschouwburg 106  
Theatre Bellevue 202  
Akhnaton 198  
De Badcuyp 199  
Tropeninstituut Theater 199**SHOPPING ACCESSORIES**

Claire V 142

**ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**Jacob Hooy & Co 141  
Po Chai Tong 141**ART & ANTIQUES**Herman Brood Galerie 137  
Cityboek 148  
Decorativa 148  
Eduard Kramer 148  
EH Ariëns Kappers 148, 6  
HUG Gallery for International Photography 143  
Jaski 148Josine Bokhoven 142  
Klein Antiek 145  
Kleurgamma 143  
Lieve Hemel 148  
Mendo 145  
Nic Nic 145  
Reflex Modern Art Gallery 148  
Reflex New Art Gallery 149  
Rock Archive 142  
Typo Gallery 141**BICYCLES**

Fietsfabriek 153

**BOOKS**American Book Center 137  
Antiquariaat Kok 140  
Architectura & Natura 145  
Athenaeum Bookshop & Newsagency 137  
Au Bout du Monde 137  
Boekie Woekie 145  
Book Exchange 141  
English Bookshop 143  
Fotografia 143  
Galerie Lambiek 149  
International Theatre & Film Books 149  
Nijhof & Lee 141  
Pied À Terre 152  
Selexyz Scheltema 149  
Stadsboekwinkel 153  
Vrolijk 204  
Waterstone's 137**CAMPING, OUTDOOR & SPORT**Bever Zwerfport 152  
Carl Denig 149  
Women's Outdoor World 152-3**CHILDREN'S**Broer & Zus 143  
De Beestenwinkel 141  
De Winkel van Nijntje 152  
Knuffels 141-2  
Mechanisch Speelgoed 143  
Pinokkio 137  
Tinkerbell 149  
Xsmall 152**CLOTHING**C&A 137  
Episode 148  
Female & Partners 138  
H&M 138  
Riele 142  
Shirt Shop 204  
So Dutch Fashion 154  
Spoiled 149  
University Shop 138  
Van Ravenstein 145-6  
Volksbond Shop 146  
Young Designers United 149**DEPARTMENT STORES**De Bijenkorf 138  
Hema 138  
Maison de Bonneterie 138  
Vroom & Dreesmann 138**DESIGN & HOMEWARES**BeBob Design 149  
De Emaillekeizer 153  
Droog Design 142  
Frozen Fountain 146  
Wonderwood 140**EROTICA & GAY**Female & Partners 138  
Mr B 204  
Rob 204**FASHION**Be Innocent 146  
Concrete 139  
Cora Kemperman 149  
Eva Damave 143  
Exota 146  
Fates 146  
Hana Zuki 149  
Henxs 142  
Lady Day 146  
Laundry Industry 138  
Laura Dols 146  
Local Service 146  
Look Out 150  
Miauw 146  
Uri Duri 146  
YOI 153  
Zipper 146**FOOD & DRINK**Arnold Cornelis 143-4  
Australian Homemade 152Cracked Kettle 138-9  
De Belly 143  
De Bierkoning 139  
De Kaaskamer 147  
De Waterwinkel 152  
Deshima 150  
Eichholtz 150  
Frank's Smokehouse 153  
Gall & Gall 152  
Geels & Co 140  
Hart's Wijnhandel 150  
Het Oud-Hollandsche Snoepwinkelkje 143  
JG Beune 144  
Le Cellier 139  
Meeuwig & Zn 147  
Puccini Bombon 142  
't Zonnetje 143  
Unlimited Delicious 147  
Urban Picnic 147**GAG GIFTS**

Nieuws 147

**GAMES**

Gamekeeper 147

**JEWELLERY**Amstel Diamonds 154  
Amsterdam Diamond Center 154  
Beadies 147  
Beaufort 139  
Coster Diamonds 154  
Goldstrasse 144  
Hans Appenzeller 141**MARKETS**Albert Cuypmarkt 118, 151  
antiques markets 98, 151  
art markets 98, 151  
Bloemenmarkt 99, 150-1  
Boerenmarkt 151  
book market 151  
cheese market 236  
De Looier antiques market 151  
Lindengracht market 151  
Noordermarkt 85, 151  
plant market 98, 151  
stamp & coin market 151  
Waterlooplein flea market 151  
Westermarkt 151**MUSIC**Back Beat Records 150  
Blue Note 139Boudisque 150  
Broekmans & Van Poppel 152  
Concerto 150  
Discostars 144  
Fame Music 139  
Get Records 150  
Killa Cutz 150  
Rush Hour Records 150  
Wax Well Records 150**PERFUMES & COSMETICS**La Savonnerie 144  
Rituals 139  
Skins Cosmetics 146**PERSONAL CARE**

Etos 152

**PHARMACIES**

Lairesse Apotheek 152

**PHOTOGRAPHY**Amsterdam Photography 139  
Concrete 139**SEX SHOPS**Absolute Danny 141  
Zinne & Minne 147**SHOES**Antonia by Yvett 147  
Hester van Eeghen 147  
Seventyfive 142  
Shoebaloo 150**SHOPPING CENTRES**Kalvertoren Shopping Centre 139  
Magna Plaza 72, 139, 49**SMART DRUGS**Chills & Thrills 139  
Conscious Dreams 150  
Innerspace 139-40  
Kokopelli 141, 11  
Magic Mushroom Gallery 140**SOUVENIRS**Bazar 140  
Bloemenmarkt 150-1  
Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento 145  
Heinen Deftware 151-2  
't Klompenhuisje 142

## SPECIALITY SHOPS

3-D Hologrammen 140  
Amsterdam Watch  
Company 147  
Aurora Kontakt 151  
Blond 140  
Brilmuseum 148  
Cats & Things 144  
Christodoulou & Lamé 144  
Condomerie Het Gulden  
Vlies 141, **6**  
De Lach 144  
De Ode 153  
De Witte Tandem Winkel  
148  
Fair Trade Shop 140  
Himalaya 141  
Internationaal Design  
Centrum 144  
Joe's Vliegerwinkel 142  
Kitsch Kitchen 144  
La Diablita 144  
Marañon Hangmatten 151  
Mevis & Italiaander 153  
Nou Moe Stripwinkel 145  
Petsalon 145  
Santa Jet 148, **6**  
Stenelux 153  
Vlieger 151

## SIGHTS

### AMSTERDAM FOR CHILDREN

Amsterdam Bos 131  
Artis Zoo 121  
Madame Tussaards  
Amsterdam 71  
NEMO 69-70, **52**  
Tropenmuseum 128  
TunFun 80  
Vondelpark 115, **8**

### AREAS & STREETS

Azartplein 127  
Barcelonaplein 126  
Dam 69  
Entrepotdok 123-4  
Garden Quarter 90  
Golden Bend 103  
Heiligeweg 73  
Johnny Jordaanplein  
84, 90

**000** map pages  
**000** photographs

Kalverstraat 73  
La Vie en Rose 74  
Leidseplein 99  
Negen Straatjes 91  
Nes 77  
Palmdwarsstraat 89  
Pieter Cornelisz  
Hooftstraat 109  
Reguliersgracht 107  
Rembrandtplein 104  
Rokin 69  
Rozenwarsstraat 90  
Rozengracht 90  
Spiegel Quarter 107  
Spui 69  
Utrechtsestraat 106  
Warmoesstraat 77  
Waterlooplein 80  
Westergasfabriek 130  
Westerstraat 89  
Zandhoek 130  
Zeedijk 76

### BEACHES

Nemo Beach 70

### BOATS

Poezenboot 95

### BREWERIES

Heineken Experience 118

### BRIDGES

Blauwbrug 104  
Drieharingenbrug 130  
Enneüs Heerma Brug 52  
Jan Schaeferbrug 127  
Magere Brug 105  
Torensluis 96

### BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES

Amstelsluizen 105  
Amsterdam American  
Hotel 99, 217  
Amsterdam RAI 131  
Beurs van Berlage 69  
Centraal Station 70-1  
De Gooyer Windmill 124  
De Hallen 228  
De Koophandel 90  
Felix Meritis Building 94  
Frankendael 128  
Gijsbert Dommer Huis 104  
Greenland Warehouses 48  
Greenpeace Building  
50, **51**  
Groene & Grauwe Valk 89

Haarlem Centraal 228  
Haarlemmerpoort 89  
Huis aan de Drie  
Grachten 48  
Huis Met de Hoofden 95  
ING Huis 52  
Kabouterhuis 118  
Maagdenhuis 50  
Metz department store  
106  
Moederhuis 52  
Montelbaanstoren 47, **82**  
Muiderpoort 124  
Munttoren 48  
Olympic Stadium 131  
Oostindisch Huis 80-2  
Oudemanhuispoort 77  
Paleis van Justitie 106  
PC Hooft Store 50  
Piraeus 126  
Rasphuis Gate 73  
Rietveld-Schröderhuis 235  
Scheepvaarthuis 71  
Schreierstoren 74-5  
Stadhuis 228  
Stadsarchief 106  
Stopera 79-80  
Trippenhuis 79  
Waag 78  
Waaggebouw 236  
Westerdokeiland 52  
Westindisch Huis 96  
Whale 126

### CANALS

Bloemgracht 87  
Brouwersgracht 85, 96  
Damrak 70  
Eglantiersgracht 87  
Keizersgracht 96  
Noordhollands Kanaal 133  
Oudegracht 234  
Preinsengracht 96  
Reguliersgracht 104

### CHURCHES

Amstelkerk 104-5  
Bakeneskerk 230  
Begijnhof Kapel 68  
De Duif 105  
Domtoren 234  
Engelse Kerk 68  
Grote Kerk 237  
Grote Kerk van St Bavo  
228  
Krijtberg 106  
Mozes en Aäronkerk 82

Nieuwe Kerk 66-7  
Noorderkerk 85  
Oude Kerk 75, **47**  
Ronde Lutherse Kerk  
73  
St Nicolaaskerk 71  
Vondelkerk 117  
Westerkerk 93, **49**  
Zuiderkerk 80

### CONCERT VENUES

Concertgebouw 111-12,  
199, **51**  
Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ  
125, 200  
Orgelpark 115

### CULTURAL CENTRES

De Rode Hoed 96  
Prostitution Information  
Centre 76

### DIAMONDS

Gassan Diamonds 79

### EROTIC THEATRES

Casa Rosso 76, **11**

### GALLERIES

Civic Guard Gallery 68  
De Appel 99  
FOAM 99  
HUG Gallery for  
International  
Photography 143  
Netherlands Media Art  
Institute 94-5

### HOFJES

Begijnhof 68, **46**  
Brouwers Hofje 228  
Claes Claeszhofje 85  
Frans Loenen Hofje  
228-9  
Hofje van Loo 229  
Hofje van Straats 229  
Karthuizerhofje 85, **8**  
Lindenhofje 85  
Proveniershuis 228  
Raphenhofje 89  
St Andrieshofje 85  
Suyckerhofje 85  
Teylers Hofje 229  
Van Brienenhofje 96  
Venetiae 85

### HOUSING ESTATES

De Dageraad 120  
Het Schip Housing Estate  
130  
Scheepstimmermanstraat  
126  
Venetie 127

### LIBRARIES

Openbare Bibliotheek  
Amsterdam 71  
Pintothuis 80  
University Library 74

### MARKETS

Albert Cuypmarkt 118,  
151  
Alkmaar 236  
antiques markets 98, 151  
art markets 98, 151  
Bloemenmarkt 99, 150-1  
Boerenmarkt 151  
book market 151  
De Looier antiques  
market 151  
Lindengracht market 151  
Noordermarkt 85, 151  
plant market 98, 151  
stamp & coin market 151  
Waterlooplein flea  
market 151  
Westermarkt 151

### MONUMENTS

Homomonument 95  
Nationaal Monument 71  
Scream 128

### MOSQUES

De Zaaier 90

### MUSEUMS

Allard Pierson Museum  
73-4  
Amsterdam Tulip  
Museum 87  
Anne Frank Huis 93  
Arcam 70, **45**  
Bijbels Museum 95  
Centraal Museum 235  
CoBRA Museum 131  
De Valk 232  
Diamond Museum 113  
Electrische  
Museumtramlijn  
Amsterdam 131  
Energetica 124

Erotic Museum 76  
Filmmuseum 115  
Frans Hals Museum 229  
Geelvinck Hinlopen Huis  
104  
Hash & Marijuana  
Museum 76  
Hermitage Amsterdam  
106  
Het Oranje Voetbal  
Museum 73  
Hollands Kaasmuseum  
236-7  
House of Bols 112-13  
Houseboat Museum 88  
Huis Marseille 95  
Joods Historisch Museum  
79  
Kattenkabinet 103, **7**  
Kröller-Müller Museum  
132  
Lakenhal 232  
Living Tomorrow Pavilion  
131  
Madame Tussaards  
Amsterdam 71  
Max Euwe Centrum 106  
Multatuli Museum 95  
Museum Amstelkring  
75-6  
Museum Boerhaave 232  
Museum Het  
Catharijneconvent 235  
Museum Het  
Rembrandthuis 78-9  
Museum van Loon 99-103  
Museum  
Willet-Holthuysen 103  
Nationaal Biermuseum  
237  
Nationaal  
Vakbondsmuseum 123  
National Museum  
van Speelklok tot  
Pierement 235  
Naturalis – Nationaal  
Natuurhistorisch  
Museum 232  
Nederlands  
ScheepvaartMuseum  
124  
NEMO 69-70, **52**  
News Photo 94  
Persmuseum 126  
Pianola Museum 85-7  
Rijksmuseum 111, **7, 50**  
Rijksmuseum van  
Oudheden 232

Rijksmuseum voor  
Volkenkunde 232  
Sexmuseum Amsterdam  
71  
Stedelijk Museum  
(Alkmaar) 237  
Stedelijk Museum  
Building 113  
Stedelijk Museum Bureau  
Amsterdam 88-9  
Stedelijk Museum CS 69  
Tassenmuseum Hendrikje  
103  
Teylers Museum 230  
Theater Instituut  
Nederland 93-4  
Tropenmuseum 128  
Universiteitsmuseum 235  
Van Gogh Museum  
109-11, 200, **7, 52**  
Verzetsmuseum 123  
WerfMuseum 't  
Kromhout 124  
Zaans Museum 238

### PALACES

Royal Palace 67-8, **49**

### PARKS & GARDENS

Amstelpark 130  
Amsterdamse Bos 131  
De Burcht 232  
Hortus Botanicus  
(Amsterdam) 123, **8**  
Hortus Botanicus  
(Leiden) 232  
Keukenhof 233  
Museumplein 111, **51**  
Oosterpark 128  
Sarphatipark 118  
Vondelpark 115, **8**  
Westerpark 130

### RIDING SCHOOLS

Hollandsche Manege 115

### STATUES & SCULPTURES

Dockworker statue 78  
golden torso 74  
Laurens Coster statue  
228  
Nelle 74  
statue of educator  
Theo Thijssen 89  
statue of Queen  
Wilhelmina 69

### SYNAGOGUES

Portuguese-Israelite  
Synagogue 79

### TEMPLES

Guan Yin Shrine 76

### THEATRES

Hollandsche Schouwburg  
123  
Koninklijk Theater Carré  
105, 199, **10**  
Stadsschouwburg 106

### ZOOS

Artis Zoo 121-3

### SLEEPING APARTMENTS

Windketel 224

### B&BS

Between Art & Kitsch  
B&B 222  
Collector 220  
Flynt B&B 221  
Maes B&B 216  
Xaviera Hollander Bed &  
Breakfast 220

### BICYCLE HOTELS

Bicycle Hotel Amsterdam  
222

### BOUTIQUE HOTELS

Aero Hotel 207  
Amistad Hotel 207  
Black Tulip Hotel 207  
Canal House Hotel 216  
College Hotel 219  
Hampshire Classic Hotel  
Toren 216  
Hotel Brouwer 231  
Hotel de Filosoof 223  
Hotel Fita 219-20  
Hotel Hoksbergen 213  
Hotel Luxer 214  
Hotel New Amsterdam  
216  
Hotel Orlando 218  
Hotel Résidence le Coin  
212  
Hotel Roemer 221  
Hotel Vondel 221  
Lloyd Hotel 223  
Miau Suites 216  
Misc Eat Drink Sleep 214  
Qbic Hotel 224  
Seven Bridges 217  
Yotel 224



**DELUXE HOTELS**

Dylan 215  
Hotel Pulitzer 215-16  
Seven One Seven 217

**HOSTELS**

Aivengo Youth Hostel 213  
Christian Youth Hostel  
‘The Shelter City’ 214  
Christian Youth Hostel  
‘The Shelter Jordan’  
215  
Orfeo Hotel 207  
Stadsdoelen Youth  
Hostel 214  
StayOkay Amsterdam  
Zeeburg 224  
StayOkay Vondelpark 222  
Strowis Budget Hostel 236

**HOTELS**

Hotel Amadeus 230  
Hotel Carillon 230  
Hotel de Doelen 233  
Hotel Mayflower 233  
Hotel Nieuwe Minerva  
233  
Joops Hotel 230

**HOUSEBOATS**

Captain’s Place 224  
Frederic’s Rentabike &  
Houseboats 216

**INNS**

Apple Inn Hotel 222  
Borgmann Villa Hotel  
222  
Budget Hotel Clemens  
Amsterdam 216-17  
City Hotel 218  
Hestia Hotel 221  
Hotel Aalborg 222  
Hotel Aalders 220  
Hotel Acacia 215  
Hotel Adolesce 218  
Hotel Agor 218  
Hotel Amstelzicht  
217-18  
Hotel Amsterdam  
Wichmann 215  
Hotel Bema 220  
Hotel de Admiraal 218  
Hotel Freeland 218  
Hotel Kap 218  
Hotel Nadia 216  
Hotel Parklane 223  
Hotel Pax 217  
Hotel Piet Hein 221  
Hotel Prinsenhof 219  
Hotel Rembrandt 223  
Hotel van Onna 215  
Liliane’s Home 223  
Museum Square Hotel 220  
Owl Hotel 221  
Hotel Zandbergen 221

**INTERNATIONAL  
HOTELS**

Amstel Intercontinental  
Hotel 217  
Amsterdam American  
Hotel 99, 217  
Banks Mansion 217  
Bellevue Hotel 212  
Eden Lancaster Hotel  
223  
Hilton Amsterdam 219  
Hotel V 224  
Mövenpick Hotel City  
Centre 223  
NH Grand Hotel  
Krasnapolsky 213

**LUXURY HOTELS**

Fusion Suites 220-1  
Grand Hotel Karel V 236  
Hotel de l’Europe 212

**PARTY HOSTELS  
& HOTELS**

Amstel Botel 213  
Hans Brinker Budget  
Hotel 219  
Hotel Acro 220  
Hotel Arena 224  
Hotel the Crown 214  
Hotel Winston 214  
Old Nickel 214  
Quentin Hotel 219

**STONER  
HOSTELS &  
HOTELS**

Euphemia Hotel 218  
Flying Pig Downtown  
Hostel 213  
Hemp Hotel 219  
Hotel Brian 213  
Hotel Hortus 223  
International Budget  
Hostel 215

**TOP PICKS**

accommodation 209  
architecture 46  
drinking & smoking 177  
eating 155, 161, 166  
for children 105  
free activities 103  
gay & lesbian Amsterdam  
203  
Jordaan 85  
Medieval Centre 68  
Nieuwmarkt 78  
nightlife & arts 195  
Plantage, Eastern Islands  
& Eastern Docklands  
121  
shopping 135, 145  
sights 55  
Southern Canal Belt 99  
Western Canal Belt 93

000 map pages  
000 photographs

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